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030



092



100



April

2007

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COMMENT

LADY LUCK can be a fickle bitch at times and when you race motorcycles for a living you learn to fear her moods more than most. Imagine, say, you're a professional motocrosser. After a couple of SX appearances and then a brief bit of R&R you've been back on it – working hard in the gym, pounding the pavement, spinning out the miles on your bike to ensure a solid CV base to build your season on. If you're good enough to ride for a big team – or lucky enough to have some money behind you – it's then off to Spain or the States for pre-season testing and knocking out some laps in the winter sun.

So far so good. Then, in your first race of the new season, it goes totally and utterly tits-up. It might be down to a small lapse in concentration, it might not even be your fault – there could be a mechanical failure or someone could go down in front of you – but one minute all that hard work over the winter is paying off, the next you're on your arse and your season's in ruins. It's happened to Stefan Everts, it's happened to Josh Coppins, it so very nearly happened to Carl Nunn at the Hawkstone International. So what's my point? I guess what I'm trying to say is that from our side of the fence it may look incredibly glamorous to be a pro racer (okay, I admit, there's nowt glamorous about Hawkstone in March in the rain) but the reality is a lot of behind-the-scenes suffering geared towards reaching a goal that can be snatched away in the blink of an eye.

Someone who has never, ever caused me any behind-the-scenes suffering (oh effortless, uncontrived link) is Sir Jack Burnicle! Apart from about four or five issues when I had yet to tempt him back from MXUK (RIP) at the start of my tenure here, Jack has contributed to every issue of DBR I've been fortunate to oversee as editor. The man hits deadlines in the same seemingly effortless way as Stefan Everts was capable of hitting the same line lap after lap after lap and now he's hit something else as well – the big six zero! Despite becoming a sexagenarian Jack's incredibly enthusiastic, boyish outlook on life continues to shine through in his consistently crisp copy where alliteration always abounds and his ebullient energy eternally engages (just my little tribute there)! Apologies for not being able to make it but I hope you had a brilliant birthday bash Burnicle – and here's to many more magnificent missives!

Someone who has caused me no end of behind-the-scenes suffering (oh effortless, uncontrived link #2) is our man in Ireland Mr Stevie Mills! Having said that I like to think it's a two-way thing and over the years having consumed his sizeable supply of Havana Club and then fallen on him, demanded countless lifts from Belfast Airport and generally given as good as I've got I reckon it's honours even. Having said that I actually owe him an apology this month after deriding him in our March issue for his woefully short Blarney column. In cutting and pasting it from his email I managed to miss half of it and then had the audacity to take the Mickey Bliss out of him for his laziness. Sorry Stevie, please forgive me (although, to be fair, next time don't email it across with about a zillion return spaces inserted halfway through).

Finally this month, I'd like to draw your attention to the big market research exercise we're currently undertaking. Your opinions really do matter to us so hook up to www.dirtbikerider.com and click on the 'win £1000' button on the left-hand side. If you fill in the survey you'll be helping to shape the future of DBR and you could land yourself a cool grand in the process. Just like dating an ice cream man's daughter, it's what's known in the trade as a double bonus!

Sean

© Jonty Edmunds



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VERO HERO!

Knighter starts his GNCC season with a strong second in Vero Beach, Florida

MAGNIFICENT MANXMAN David Knight overcomes problems caused by a pre-race hand injury and puts in a stunning performance at round one of the US GNCC series to finish second in the three-hour race held at Vero Beach in Florida.

With Knighter feeling well below par it's the tenacious Aussie veteran Shane Watts who takes a surprise victory in the punishing heat and humidity of the Floridian forests.

After a 10th place start Knighter battles through the pack of leading riders on his factory KTM into second place in the closing stages of the race. With the leader just about within reach blisters and a last lap fall finally kill any chance David has of catching the former GNCC champ.

"I'm over the moon to have finished in second – it's the same result Juha [Salminen] got in '05. I just want to get through the second race now with a similar result and get my hand fully healed up and get bike fit and ready for the rest of the championship.

"The first few laps were hard because of the dust and not knowing exactly where all the tree roots were but things went really well. I worked my way past several riders and felt good at the end of the first lap.

"I've not done much riding during the two weeks before the race so I didn't feel as fresh on my bike as I should. My hand wasn't too bad thankfully but it did start to give me some trouble towards the end of the race as I started to get really bad blisters. My lack of bike fitness was more of a problem.

"I'm still not 100 per cent settled and comfortable on a two-stroke yet after riding a four-stroke for so many years but I know that the more I race the better I will feel. All things considered I'm more than pleased with finishing second. It was a hard race but a great result to start the championship with."

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Atlanta SX with
Ivan Tedesco getting
the drop ahead of
James Stewart,
Ricky Carmichael
and 'Dead Eye'
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Pod MX knee brace

If you enjoy enjoying life then you'll know how important it is to have functioning knees. As well as making it possible to bend your legs in the middle so you can sit, walk places and kneel down, knees are also the leg joint of champions like Ricky Carmichael and Stefan Everts.

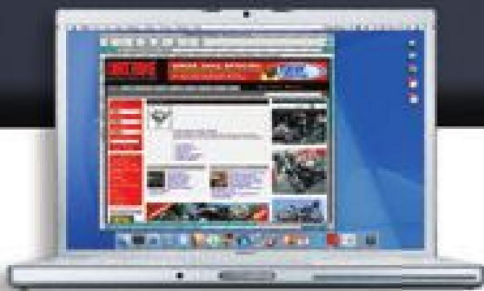
With knees being so important to everyday life it's advisable to protect them from the strains and stresses of off-road riding by wearing knee braces like these off-the-shelf PodMX ones. PodMX are a brand-new manufacturer of knee braces but they've nailed it with their first attempt as they're comfortable, stylish and well-priced.

But if you don't fancy splurging out close to 500 spondoolies on a pair of Pods we're offering one lucky reader the chance to walk away with a pair of the revolutionary braces for free. To get your hands on this fantastic pair all you have to do is go online to www.dirtbikerider.com, answer the stupidly simple question and then fill in the online entry form.

The knee related question we want you to answer – either online or written on the back of a postcard or sealed down envelope if you don't swing that www way – is this. Which of the following songs is a famous knee-related music hall classic?

- Is it: A) *Knees up Mother Brown*
B) *Knees up Mike Brown*
C) *Knees up Farmer Brown*
D) *Knees up James Brown*
E) *Knees up Jackie Brown*

When you think you know the answer log on to www.dirtbikerider.com and follow the comps link or send it to us (along with your name, address and a daytime telephone number) at 'Nice n' Kneesy', DBR Magazine, 12 Victoria Street, Morecambe, Lancashire LA4 4AG. The first correct entry picked randomly by someone with a pair of knees after the closing date on April 13 will win a pair of Pods.



GORDON CROCKARD

WRECKED!

A STORMY START TO THE SEASON SEES GORDY'S GEAR LOOKING SLIGHTLY SECOND-HAND – AND HE'S NOT EVEN MADE IT TO THE FIRST BRITISH ROUND YET...

WORDS BY GORDON CROCKARD PHOTO BY STILL-MX.CO.UK

HEY THERE people, it's waffle time so listen up! I'm now back in the camper en-route to race after race after race for the next eight months. I raced Hawkstone at the weekend and what a mess it was – new equipment is no longer part of my set-up! Bikes, gear, trucks, awnings – you name it, it's been half-wrecked before the season's even started properly...

Now you're possibly one of those people who thinks 'oh shut up Crockard, you get it all free anyway' but whether I get free product or not there's still the heartache of seeing valuable equipment getting a hard time in wet, gritty conditions. Big mess or not we all had a relatively successful/productive weekend. Sixth and 11th were my finishes and some much needed race laps were put in.

Unlike some other riders I haven't really been doing much motocross practice in recent months but now the weather is improving it will allow for plenty of practice between race weekends. And I've had a great two months of physical training which I'll have in my back pocket as a vital tool to bring in the results I want right through the season. I may not be ready as a whole race-winning package for March but I don't mind as I've prepared for the full '07 championship, not just the beginning of the '07 championship!

During the whole 'preparing for the season' nonsense I became a victim of circumstance. I created the 'circumstance' and I along with Amy was a victim of my personality. I'll paint the picture... I was chasing the clock during one of those 48-hour days I have every now and again but it turns out, it was a 24-hour day and I was late, late, late. I was dropping off a bike at a friend's house and needed diesel on the way but didn't want to be too late so decided to get diesel afterwards. But afterwards it was so late that all the garages were closed so I decided to get diesel the next day when I was on my way to the ferry. So...on our way to get diesel, to get the ferry, to get on the road, to get to Hawkstone, to get some prize money, I ran out of diesel (don't you normally carry some spare in your water tanks? – SL). Call it an oversight or bad organisation or stupidity or whatever, the bottom line is it happened and I wasn't feeling too well 'prepared' on my way to the season opener. Luckily, reliable good friend Burnsby came to the rescue and we bombed up the road and only just made the ferry.

Hawkstone was so wet I got stuck on the way into the paddock – no big drama compared to getting out which was a full-on pulled-out-by-a-tractor job in the pitch dark. A big, big thank you to all the club workers who helped!

On the Monday after I was booked in for an awning to be fitted to the camper and that was happening at the Awning Company in Bolton. We were there all day so headed into town for a look around the place and to get some lunch – a little shopping, coffee, that sort of thing and quite a difference to the day before when I felt like I didn't have time to see anyone. There were so many people prior to the event I'd said 'see ya at Hawkstone' to who I never got to see.

Well done to Paul Rowlands of PAR Homes Honda! He had a massive job on his hands getting the entire team put together for the deadline. New truck, new riders, new mechanics, new sponsors, new pitwear, new riding kit, new everything. Phil Roe (Factory) worked his northern backside off on my bikes and his enthusiasm is infectious. Between Phil and Steve Clitheroe they've given me a great bike to start from. More testing of different ideas will progress the level even further but for now I'm pleased with what I'm riding.

Geoff Walker or Sully might even be lucky enough some day to get a spin on it in a mag test – if they're man enough?

One of the associate backers in my PAR Homes Honda set-up is a telecommunications company called KP-Equipe. I'm running their brand logo on my bike and gear and have their full support at many of the race events. Keith and Stuart who I deal with at the company attended the wet Hawkstone meeting and I'm grateful for their input into my racing.

Support from outside the MX industry is hard to secure and hopefully we can both get the success we have planned from our arrangement.

Yesterday I was asked if I could take some non-MX media guests out to Mexico for four days to explain and co-witness the Red Bull X-Fighters that's taking place there on March 21-25. Of course, I wanted to agree immediately but that wasn't going to happen as I'm booked to race at the second round of the British champs which will be at Landrake. Bummer!

It's part of the build-up press campaign to promote the X-Fighters that's coming to Slane Castle in Ireland on May 26 but I'm likely going to miss that too as it's the same weekend as the Japanese GP.

It's a hard life sometimes...



BOU WOW!

Toni topples Raga to lift indoor crown

SPANISH TEENAGER Toni Bou sensationally clinches the world indoor trials championship title a round early when he pilots his Repsol Montesa four-stroke to second place on the island of Menorca.

The 19-year-old's runner-up finish behind factory Sherco rider Albert Cabestany in the series' penultimate round leaves him 10 points clear of his fellow Spaniard with just the championship finale in Madrid left to run. Even if he fails to score in the Spanish capital and former champion Cabestany comes out on top, Bou will still be champ by virtue of his better win record.

"I have waited my whole life to enjoy days like this, to be world champion," says a delighted Bou. "The last races became very hard for me because of the nerves and the pressure to be closer to this dream. I'd like to celebrate this title by winning in Madrid."

"When I joined Repsol-Montesa I was sure here I would find the best way to progress my career but I never imagined that success would come so quickly in only my second season indoors. The title is the best reward I can offer the team for showing such faith in me."

Defending champ Adam Raga is third in Menorca and currently holds third in the table, two points behind Cabestany. Best Brit in the series is Dougie Lampkin who's back in sixth.



SIZE MATTERS!

10 inches or 12 – Minibikepro and the ACU have got a national series lined up for you

THE ACU and Europe's leading minibike specialist Minibikepro have been flat-out for the past six months putting together the UK's first officially sanctioned National Minibike Series.

The series will be promoted by MBP's Tristan Tunstall who's been involved with organising minibike races in the UK for over five years. "We have a good idea of what riders want from a race series and the time is now right to lift minibike racing in Europe to a more professional level," reckons Tristan. "We will run a well organised series of national calibre races, similar to that of the Maxis British Motocross Championships.

"Together with the ACU we have produced technical regulations relating to bike classes, minibike track design and rider safety. The minibike scene is very large in the UK but has previously lacked direction, partly due to the fact that it started off as a backyard sport. This is all set to change with the ACU and MBP working together to put British minibike racing firmly on the world minibike map.

"My co-promoter Paul Hunt is no stranger to the UK race scene having twice been a national motocross champion. Paul has vast experience of running races and getting things properly organised to a high standard. Both Paul and I believe in doing things properly, this will be the best race series the UK minibike scene has ever seen.

"We approached the ACU to help move our plans forward as they are the most professional and established motorcycle sporting body in the UK. Together we have come up with well thought out regulations which any race organisers could and should follow. This is a very positive step for four-stroke minibike racing in the UK."

The 2007 NMS will be held over five rounds in the spring through to autumn and will visit tracks around the country. New tracks will be constructed at Doncaster Moto Park and Tonymoto in Winchester. The existing track at Mildenhall will be modified for one of the rounds with track design input from MX2 champ Carl Nunn.

There will be six categories of racing depending on wheel size and engine capacity including two 'stock control' classes which have been formulated to encourage riders to take up the sport. "We realise the importance of encouraging new riders to help grow the scene while keeping the cost of running a quality machine to a relatively low budget," claims Tristan. "The two stock classes will use Japanese machinery allowing only modest modifications.

"We will have four further classes for modified bikes too and if riders do well in a stock class they may choose to move up to a class with greater scope for permitted bike modifications."

For more information check out the series website at www.mini4gb.com



FEELING SWELL!

SWORDY STUMBLES ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY BUT THANKS TO A POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE – NOT TO MENTION HIS SPEEDOS AND SOME WATER WINGS – IT'S ONLY A SMALL SETBACK

WORDS BY STEPHEN SWORD PHOTO BY SUTTY

THIS MONTH hasn't been all that great and I've had a small set-back with my recovery. Everything was going very well up until about three weeks ago. My training was starting to go good and I was building up good strength in my leg. Then I picked up the flu and an infection in my leg again. I was in bed for the best part of three days, my immune system was very low and I was struggling to do stuff.

Later on that week the side of my ankle started to swell up more and more. I called my doctor in Belgium to see what he thought and he said to rest it for a few days and take a high dosage of antibiotics. That's exactly what I did but it didn't improve so I decided to go to the local hospital to get a second opinion – I was hoping they would either drain it or give me stronger antibiotics. They wanted to keep me in overnight and decide the next day so I called the doctor over and explained how I'd prefer to leave so I could go straight to my doctor in Belgium. He wasn't too pleased but I gave him no option and checked myself out as he wanted to open my leg up and go inside to look at the bone. I didn't have a problem with how he wanted to do it but I was worried as he didn't know the injury as well as my Belgian doctor.

Anyway, I went straight to Belgium, he took one look and decided to operate later that day. It was a simple operation just to drain the infection and look to see if there was any major problem inside – the good news is the bone looked healthy but I still stayed in for three days. One of those was Valentine's Day so that was a new experience for Jodie and I – we both celebrated with some lovely hospital food!

I had to rest and not put any weight on my foot for two weeks – you can imagine how tired I'm getting of lying on the sofa with my foot in the air. I touched base with the doctor after one week to let him know all was okay and he said I could go to the gym to do some upper body training but still not to put pressure on my foot so I grabbed my crutches and headed off down the gym.

After another week I started to put some weight on it and began to build things up and although it's continuing to improve it doesn't look like I will be ready for the first GP of the year – in fact, it's probably going to be a good two months from now. I'm very disappointed that I can't start the beginning of the season but the only way forward is to accept the setbacks I've had and come back when the time is right. Obviously, this means my goals for the season have changed. Whereas before I was looking at overall championship positions, now I want to come back physically and mentally stronger than before to give myself the best chance of winning some races before the season ends and use '07 to put me in good shape for '08.

I'm missing the races but I'm still looking forward to being at Canada Heights having not really met up with the whole team yet. It will be good to catch up with everyone and see some of the fans again so hopefully I will see you there.

Not a lot else has been going on apart from my rehab. I like to be pro-active so I find it hard not to be doing stuff when I should be resting but I'm getting better because rest is also important to help with the recovery of my ankle. Because I get a lot of swelling around the ankle I have to put an ice pack on it about eight times a day. It helps a lot and as each week goes by it gets better and better and swells less and less. I also bought myself one of those aqua joggers – it's like a big foam belt that goes around your waist so you can tread water without putting any weight on your foot. I look a bit of an idiot in the pool (that'll be down to your Speedos, not your foam belt – SL) but who cares as long as it does the job?

I decided to go shopping at the weekend to spend my leftover Christmas vouchers before they expire but there was nothing I fancied so I've still got them. But I did come back with one thing – a baby gate! Before you all jump to conclusions, no, I'm not about to become a dad yet – it's to stop the dogs coming upstairs at night. Both of them are black and black dogs on a cream carpet don't mix although that doesn't make all that much difference to me as Jodie does most of the cleaning anyway. The dogs and I just make the mess although now I'm more mobile I do get made to do a bit more Hoovering!

I actually don't mind pulling my weight a bit as I can't stand things being a mess. When I used to share a room with TC back when I was first riding for MJ Church I was forever cleaning up his crap. I even cleaned up his sick once after he brought up chicken chow mein all over the stairs one night. When I got up in the morning there was no direct route for me to get down – in the end I had to climb the wall like Spiderman to get around it. Sorry to let this one slip Tom but every time someone has chow mein I'm reminded of it – noodles everywhere!

WASA #4





Grant Langston #8

*8 Grant Langston
Team Factory Yamaha

Tim Ferry #15

*15 Tim Ferry
Team Factory
Kawasaki-Monster

Michael Byrne #26

*26 Michael Byrne
Team Rockstar-Suzuki

Kevin Windham #14

*14 Kevin Windham
Team NoFear-
Samsung-Honda

James Stewart #7

*7 James Stewart
Team Factory
Kawasaki-Monster

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Tuff Love!

Chad Reed stuffs it up the inside of James Stewart at the St Louis SX and sends him into the Tuff Blox – then eats dirt himself! And who is on hand to pick up the pieces? Yep, step forward the ‘retired’ Ricky Carmichael

Steve Cox






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A man with short brown hair, wearing a black, red, and white racing suit, is shown from the waist up. He is wearing a black chest protector with a silver and black logo. He is looking down and adjusting a strap on his chest. The background is dark and blurry, with some racing-related elements visible. A racing helmet is partially visible on the right side of the frame.

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BLARNEY

WORDS BY STEVIE MILLS PHOTO BY TOBY FULLER

POWER BARRIR!

MARTY MUSCLES IN AT HAWKSTONE, MERTON TOPS THE MARCH HARE AND POOR STEVIE SUFFERS A PC MELTDOWN

THE YEAR 2007, the location Ireland – Co Down to be exact with its all-singing and all-dancing flat roads, running water, exceptional Vodaphone coverage and crappy electricity supply which just threw my computer 3,000,000 volts!

Now, computers take that sort of thing personally – mine is no exception and it crashed! I know about as much about computers as they know about me and deadline was approaching so in desperation I called DBR HQ.

Feeling like a schoolboy who had forgotten to do his homework, I told he who must be obeyed of my calamity – Blarney had been nuked! But this apparent attempt to prevent this month's Blarney reaching you has failed – if the Bossman decides to print it in full this month!

A big thanks to all those who give me a ribbing over the slanderous comments made by my illustrious leader in the last issue of DBR. The key word that cut the deepest was 'lazy' and when 'er indoors read the offending issue she said "you resemble that remark" when clearly she meant "resent that remark" – or did she?

Anyway, enough waffle – let's get down to business. The power of Barr was evident for all to see at the recent Hawkstone International MX. Despite the dreadful racing conditions Martin rode with maturity. One swallow doesn't make a summer as my granny used to say but

Martin is the only other Irish rider capable of flying the colours at international level. GC's Hawkstone was pretty uneventful in the passing manoeuvre stakes but he should be content in the knowledge that he placed higher than all of his fellow British championship contenders apart from Ken De Dycker.

By now Canada Heights will be a fading memory among the relics of early season events and the post-race post-mortems will have rated riders either pro or slow. The Irish Armada having sailed across the pond in search of greatness will be somewhat shell-shocked at the actual speed required to qualify at the British champs, especially with the host of GP stars in attendance. Landrake will be the next port of call and to be honest that will suit our boys a tad more – and all the better if it's wet as that will slow the pace.

Good luck to you all who make the trip – it takes a lot of courage to step away from the safety net of racing in Ireland. There are some who will take pot-shots and say they are wasting their time doing UK championship meetings but for my part if you are lucky enough to go then enjoy the experience – sure, you may not be rewarded with a factory contract straight away if at all but as with just about any

experience in life if it doesn't kill you, you'll learn from it.

The Mad March Hare at Ballykelly passed without major injuries which is a pleasant surprise. Graham Irwin – the new Moto One/Intouch signing – simply blitzed the opposition in the Semi Expert class. Stylish and with speed to match, the question stands to team manager Phil McCullough what do you do with a 15-year-old with this amount of talent?

The son of a famous road racer, Graham has a future in motorcycle racing either on or off-road of that there is no doubt. Yes he is young but when you consider a certain French 17-year-old was winning GPs last year it's clear the top riders are getting younger every season. So while Graham is young, time has a way of catching up on you extremely quickly.

Tommy Merton made his intentions known in the premier class,

establishing a 16-second lead before dropping the Rainey Brothers Honda – I wonder, was Tommy just trying to make the race interesting? Merton claimed the March Hare Trophy and the lion's share of the cash from Wayne Garrett who kept Merton at bay to win the second moto. Third-placed Davy Gorman aboard the AJ Elite Honda kept the two-stroke fans amused throughout the day.

But let's not get too excited

as it would be silly to predict the season from the scores on the doors after Ballykelly. Desertmartin – round one of the Irish national champs – kicks the season off in earnest on April 21.

Slightly delayed congratulations to the newly married Mrs McCullough! Phillip and Cherry (stunning sister of Adam Lyons) tied the knot at the swanky Galgorm Manor Hotel just outside Ballymena. For those of you not familiar with the term swanky, roughly translated it means a licensed establishment that charges extortionate amounts of cash in exchange for tiny measures of alcohol.

But besides Dick Turpin at the bar it was a great afternoon, evening, night and early morning of celebrations which pretty much put all the Oscar after-show parties in the shade.

Philip has married his Mrs Right. By now he will know that her first name is 'Always'!

MARTIN BARR HAULS AT HAWKSTONE



Stevie



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JONTY'S BOX

WORDS AND PHOTO BY JONTY EDMUNDS

AUSSIE RULES!

SHANE WATTS PULLS OFF A SHOCK WIN AT THE OPENING ROUND OF THE US GNCC SERIES PROVING THAT TALENT AND MOTIVATION CARRY AS MUCH CLOUT AS FACTORY FINERY...

ONE THING I've learned over the years is that no two riders are motivated to win by exactly the same thing. Sure, all riders want to prove that they are the very best and that they are better than their rivals but dig a little deeper – scratch beneath the generic new season 'I want to win this year' proclamations – and what motivates one rider is never exactly the same as what motivates another, no matter what the discipline.

For some getting to the top is what motivates them. Others having reached the top simply want to stay there, to show that they truly belong there and feel that back-to-back championships is the best way of proving themselves. For some motivation comes from taking up a new challenge, competing in a race series different to the one they know and have previously championed. For others getting back to where they once were following injury or a 'good money, ****t bike' deal is what fires them up. Some want to bring their career to a close on a winning note. Some simply want to raise a middle finger to their rival competitors, former sponsors and doubters and say 'thanks for not believing in me'.

In winning the opening round of the '07 US GNCC series Aussie Shane Watts caused a major surprise. Free from the pressure of expectancy – that lay firmly on the shoulders of David Knight who replaced double series champion Juha Salminen as KTM's number one rider – Watts simply showed up with his bike in a trailer, rode smart and hard, claimed a deserved win and in doing so proved that there is life in the old dog yet. He also made the most of his time on the top of the podium by dedicating his win to 'all the riders that like me have to buy their bikes and spares'.

So what was Watts's motivation to win in Florida? Simple. A lack of 'official' support from long-term sponsor KTM. Now a competitor that has to buy his bikes and spares – just like the majority of riders the world over – Watts wanted to show that not only does he still have what it takes to win at the highest level but that he should still be getting 'official' support.

Shane being Shane he won the race his way, in vintage Wattsy style.

Starting well and quickly moving to the front the maverick former WEC, ISDE and US GNCC champion started celebrating and waving to the crowd less than one hour into the near three-hour race. Wattsy had a point to prove and he proved it the only way he knows how – by going all-out, balls-out and winning the '07 series opener and having a little fun doing so.

Now whether Watts can carry his race-winning form past round one

remains to be seen but the relaxed and focused way he topped the XC1 class in Florida suggests that he could well play a major role in the outcome of the '07 GNCC championship.

Committed to a complete championship assault, the fire that burns within Shane is unlikely to be extinguished by one good result. Now riding no more than once during the week and then racing at weekends, Shane wants to prove to himself that he can still get the winning results all riders and teams want without a full-time nine-to-five commitment to the sport.

A rider that throughout his career has never done things by the book, Wattsy's motivation to go out and buy a bike and prove a point rather than hang up his boots is to be commended. Admittedly in doing things 'his way' and often refusing to play by the rules Wattsy has alienated himself from many important sectors of the motorcycle industry and undoubtedly made life unnecessarily difficult for a rider of his unquestionable talents.

But in spending his own money, getting back in the game and paying his own expenses Shane proved that no matter how good a rider's deal is it's a rider's motivation to do well that is the most important thing. Just like Knight who finished alongside him on the podium despite carrying a hand injury and being only 80 per cent bike fit, wanting it – for whatever reason – is what really matters.

Wattsy, by his own admission, wants to do as well as he can this year in order for one of two things to happen in '08 – either get the support he feels he deserves or be able to officially retire from off-road motorcycle racing having given his last season his all. Aiming for a season of consistent podium finishes, despite drawing ever closer to the end of his career, Wattsy's motivation is seemingly stronger than ever...

WATTSY TOPS THE GNCC PODIUM



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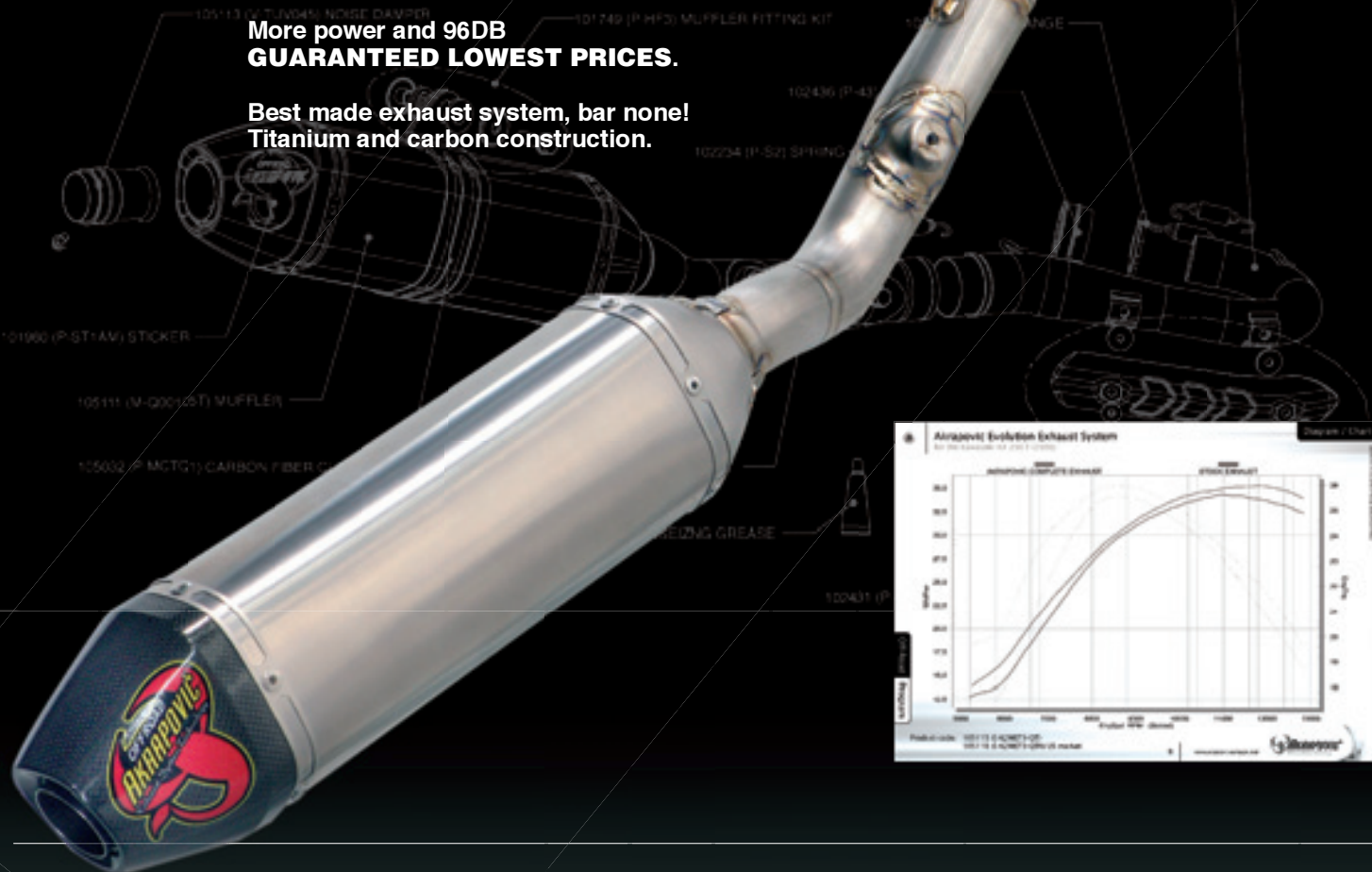


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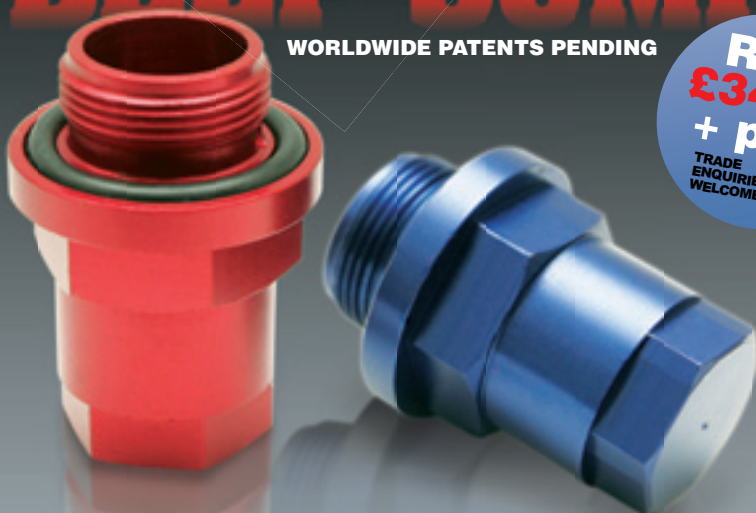
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Write to Rant, get your letter published and you'll win a one-litre trigger bottle of marvellous bike cleaning fluid Muc-Off. And if we rate your letter highly enough you'll also receive our monthly star prize – this month a pair of brown Annex Etnies trainers as worn by long-distance jumper Trigger Gumm!



BRACE ACE!

Have you guys heard about the Leatt-Brace? There has been quite a lot of talk about this product recently on the various motocross message boards scattered around the internet – Mototalk, Ronronmx, Supercross.com etc

David Bailey started it off by launching an online video message (which can be found on Mototalk) to everyone on the importance of wearing the latest spinal protection – particularly around the neck. There has been an increasing number of riders suffering broken necks and other spinal injuries in the last two or three years and I guess he felt it was important to step up and deliver a message.

I don't know how many riders suffer from these type of injuries in the UK but I have to say the whole thing is making me a little nervous. I've been riding for 10 years and to be honest I haven't really thought about it before. But I now feel that it's stupid to not take advantage of the latest technology and in the event of a serious crash I would like to improve my odds with the best protection available. I'm not trying to scare monger or anything, I'm simply saying that in a sport this dangerous surely we should all be protected.

Can you recommend anyone in the UK who sells the Leatt-Brace or something like it?

JP, via email

The good news is that Karl Prestwood at KPR Racing Services is importing the Leatt-Brace into the UK. To order yours give Paddy a call on 07970 113383 and tell him DBR sent you!

SWORD SWIPE!

I realise Swordy's Scottish and therefore tighter than a duck's ass but why the hell is he sat at home wearing a hoodie and woolly hat – turn the chuffing heating on man!

And another thing, I'm not sure what Stephen's thinking by having a pop at Suttly and the Dawg in a Bawg shots by saying his riding style is remarkably similar to Kurt Nicoll's. May I point out to the wee haggis basher that not only are their styles similar but they've also won the same number of world motocross titles which is an amount neither more nor less than Swordy has won – read it and weep!

Anyway, hope his ankle's getting better, the

comeback is going well and Wakker's not cleaned him out of Rich Tea biscuits! Speaking of Geoff is he still doing all his training down at McDonalds?

Bert van der Gobbler, via email

MX MUM: PART DEUX!

This time I'm going to have a proper Rant! I've just been reading my new ACU handbook and I've been paying special attention to the noise testing section.

The sound level standard for the meters used is IEC 651 type 2 or BSI 5969 Grade 2. Being inquisitive I decided to look up meters that meet this standard on the internet. Imagine my surprise when I read the details for these meters – some of them have a specified accuracy of plus or minus 2dB!

This surely would mean that you could take your bike (with 96dB silencer) to one track and it could measure 94dB, the next week you go to a different track and it reads 98dB when noise tested and you don't get to ride! So, you could actually fail noise testing with a bike that is meeting the required limit. Surely this can't be the case? If it is, then noise testing with a 96dB limit and no leeway would be most unfair.

Jayne, via email

Hmmmm interesting. We passed this on to Brian George at the ACU who had this to say...

"I've checked with members of our Technical Panel on the issue of sound meters and tolerance levels and can confirm that your reader is correct on the subject of the specified accuracy of Type/Grade 2 meters. These are the meters used by the majority of ACU sound testers, Type 1 meters have a tolerance level of +/- 1dB.

"However, the second part of the query is incorrect as any machine recording 98dB would be allowed as the sound tester would take into consideration the 2dB tolerance. But, if the machine recorded 99dB, the rider/team would then have modifications to make before re-presenting the bike for sound testing.

"All the ACU's sound meters are tested and calibrated on a regular basis throughout the season to ensure their accuracy.

"As one of the major issues facing all forms of motorsport, sound levels should be a high priority of both the organisers and competitors in an effort to safeguard the future of our sport."

MORE CAGE RAGE

I'm 15 years old and I've been reading Dirt Bike Rider for many years – I've recently found it to be a godsend while I've been in hospital recovering from my broken leg. I broke it while

practising and it would be ace if you could print my picture to show your readers that this is not how it's done!

Joe, Staffordshire

We agree with you Joe – having pink dressings on your cage is definitely not how it should be done! Get well soon buddy!



ERM OKAY...

With a new season under way I'm ready for the new influx of groupies into the fray. Basically, my son is a good young rider and I'm worried about the amount of young girls who seem to be attracted to motocross riders and a bit of fame.

Don't get me wrong I know riders aren't monks but a lot of young riders are having their heads turned by these girls and are not concentrating on racing when they should be. I hope my lad will be up for the racing and training and leave the rest for later.

Anon, Coventry

This letter has gotta be a joke or it's possibly an unused script for the Mr Chomondley-Warner segment of the Harry Enfield television show or maybe – dun-dun-dunnnn – you're taking your son's racing 'career' far too seriously. Chill out, enjoy your weekends at the races and remember this whole sport's about having fun!

VAN MAN!

I'm looking to upgrade my car and trailer set up and buy a small van to go racing in but because I live in a town centre and parking is tight I need something smallish. Have you got ideas what might fit my needs best?

Andrew, Lancashire

Well it's possible to fit a full sized bike in a slightly modified Vauxhall Combo van but we reckon something along the lines of a Citroen Dispatch or VW Transporter is your best bet.

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stuff



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ETNIES

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HIRED GUN!

He's the bright young thing of British motocross who oozes talent and takes everything in his stride - now armed with a factory KTM for '07 Tommy Searle has his sights set firmly on his first GP victory

Words & photos by Jonty Edmunds



BRITAIN EXPECTS a lot from Tommy Searle in '07. After showing during his first full season of grand prix racing that he has what it takes to place among the world's best riders, this season he carries the hopes of a nation as he bids to claim his first GP victory.

And it's fair to say that Tommy Searle also expects a lot from himself in '07. Turning mouth-watering promise into a season of

ever-improving results topped by two GP podium visits, Tommy turned heads for all the right reasons in '06 and rightfully landed himself a two-year factory KTM contract as a result of his efforts.

With the work ethic of a seasoned GP campaigner, a laidback but deadly serious approach to his racing, impressively consistent results and unquestionable talent Tommy now

has the experience, machinery and belief to start winning at the very highest level. In '07 Tommy Searle is gunning for a top three finish in the MX2 world championship as well as claiming his first GP win.

"I'm looking at finishing top three in the GPs this year and getting as many podiums as I can," answers Tommy honestly and concisely when asked what he hopes to achieve in '07. ►

*"I have a great bike
and team..." Tommy
Gun's got the tools
he needs to get the
job done in '07*





*This time last year
the shirt was green*





California calling Getting settled Stateside

Like so many of Europe's top young motocross racers, Tommy has his sights set on racing in the land of opportunity and perfectly-prepped tracks in the very near future. Planning on heading to the US to compete in '08, Tommy packed his bags and set off for a month of pre-season training in California at the start of this season, despite KTM wanting him to join the team's training camp in Spain with Stefan Everts.

"It was good to go and meet the guys at KTM in the States," explains Tommy. "KTM wanted me to go to Spain to prepare for the season with Stefan Everts and weren't too happy that I went to California but the US is where I want to be next year so it was good for me to go and see what's what. I got to see some supercross races, got to walk the supercross tracks with the other KTM riders and got to visit the KTM test track. I know a lot more about how things work in the States now and what to expect, which is important for my future."

Tommy used his time in SoCal to build his bike fitness ahead of what will certainly be a tough season. "It was good to ride in California. I did a lot of training over the winter in the UK but like most riders I needed to turn that into bike fitness."

Tommy was one of many on-lookers impressed by MX2 world champion Christophe Pourcel's Stateside performances. "Pourcel did really well at supercross. He was impressive. But his result was also good for Rattray, Cairoli and myself – GP riders. He showed that European GP riders have good speed and that despite the fact that the Americans are really good at supercross they can be beaten."

"I know I can do that. I have a great bike and team so I just want to get a lot of podiums. I also want to win some races."

But '07 brings with it many changes for Tommy Searle, the most obvious being his switch from the Molson Kawasaki team to the Red Bull KTM factory team. Having ignited interest in his services during his impressive debut GP season Searle found himself in the enviable – but complex – position of being wanted by two teams for '07.

"I was with Kawasaki for six years, so

deciding to leave them was difficult," offers Tommy honestly. "It came down to a choice between Kawasaki and KTM and the week leading up to my decision I didn't know what I was going to do. I kept going over and over things in my head and basically it came down to the fact that KTM is a true factory team."

Faced with the single hardest decision any professional motorcycle racer can make – leaving a familiar team and machinery for an unknown bike and company set-up – Tommy's primary concern was of having to adjust to new

working practices, new personnel and a new team environment. He needn't have worried.

"One of the main things that was worrying me was whether or not I'd get on as well with everyone at KTM as I did with everyone at Kawasaki. I didn't know anyone at KTM when I signed for them but already I feel like I've known everyone for ages, it's a great atmosphere within the team. My mechanic Gareth came with me from Molson Kawasaki which has worked well and we both feel really settled within the team."

GUNNING FOR GLORY, MX2 2007 >>

TOMMY SEARLE



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The reason Tommy decided to switch to KTM was because they could offer him a true factory bike – the one thing he knew would help improve his results more than anything else in '07. "It's a factory bike so pretty much anything I want doing is done," explains Tommy. "We've done so much testing that the bike is pretty much perfect for me. I definitely made the right decision in joining KTM. It hasn't taken me long to adjust to the bike. To be honest the only thing that has taken a while to get used to is just how good it is – how much power it has, how good it is out of the starts and how good the suspension is. The bike is great."

Backed by a manufacturer with a proven record for assisting promising young riders become GP winners, Searle heads into '07 not only as the newest recruit to KTM's four-rider factory team but as a rider that will play a key role in the eventual outcome of the '07 MX2 championship race.

With defending champion Christophe Pourcel, '05 title winner Antonio Cairoli and experienced GP campaigner Tyla Rattray seen by many as the three riders most likely to battle it out for the MX2 crown, Searle intends to prove that he has what it takes to race alongside them.

Tommy's factory KTM contract and hopes of a top three finish in the '07 MX2 series wouldn't have materialised were it not for his highly impressive '06 season. After claiming his first podium in only his 10th GP start, representing Great Britain at the Motocross des Nations, finishing as runner-up in the British MX2 champs and subsequently landing himself the factory KTM deal, it's fair to say Tommy done good last season. When you consider he was only 16 at the start of last year then you realise that Tommy actually done *really* good.

"My first full season went really well," comments Tommy remaining level-headed about his achievements. "The Molson Kawasaki team backed me 100 per cent and I felt really comfortable there. The highlight of the season was my first grand prix podium at the British GP which I backed up with another podium at the Swedish GP. After that I had consistent top 10 and top eight finishes which I was really pleased with."

That's not to say '06 wasn't without its low moments. "I really only had one bad race all season – my qualifying heat race at Namur. I knocked myself out and that was that, I didn't race. I had one other bad race – in

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Ireland when I crashed at the start – but on the whole the season went great. The crash in Ireland was frustrating because it messed me up for a top six finish in the world championship. But I'm pleased with the season and learned a lot."

With Tommy putting in spirited performances week-in, week-out his highly impressive results make it easy to forget just how much of an important season '06 was for Tommy. Starting the year as an internationally inexperienced 16-year-old, Searle finished it as – according to KTM – 'the brightest prospect to emerge from the motocross world championship in '06'.

"I didn't know what to expect at the start of '06 as I'd only done three GPs then," recalls Tommy. "I've done better than I thought I would because I was still worried about qualifying going into the first GP. I got ninth and 11th at the first GP, which surprised me straight away."

As well as his solid GP results Tommy shone in the British championship. Facing older and more experienced competition in the form of GP winners Carl Nunn and Billy MacKenzie, Searle came close to doing the unthinkable and almost topped the MX2 title chase.

"It was disappointing not to win the championship but at the start of the year I wasn't expecting to win it. Billy had a few GP podiums last year, Carl has had GP podiums most years and I didn't have any. I didn't even have a podium finish at a British championship event at the start of the season. I was never thinking that I would win the championship, I just wanted to get consistent podium finishes which I did.

"I improved a lot from the season before and the championship came down to Carl and myself. Carl and I both rode really well at the

last race at Hawkstone and finished a long way ahead of the rest. I don't think anyone would have beaten Carl on that day."

With his growing experience and confidence Tommy's results in the world championship also improved. Hampered by mediocre starts during the first half of the season, the British GP was a turning point that saw Searle claim his first podium finish having started the race at the front – not in the middle – of the pack.



"During the first half of the season I needed better starts in the world championship," admits Tommy. "I knew that I could get better results if I could get out of the gate better. Every time I was starting around 15th and just needed better starts so that I could run with the faster guys. I knew that would bring my pace up. I wasn't getting good starts until the British GP. I was third out of the gate there and stayed third until the finish."

Even if Tommy's results hadn't have been quite as good as they were one of the most important things in '06, aside from proving himself as a future title contender, was to learn – to learn new tracks, to learn to deal with bad starts, to learn to make the most of a good

start, to learn GP racing. At every race and in every situation he learned.

"The most important thing I learned last season was just how vital the start is, it helps so much to get a good start," admits Tommy. "It sounds obvious but the start is so important. Making your gate, preparing your rut behind the gate is so, so important at every race. It's easy to think 'I can't be bothered with my gate' but you have to make sure that it's perfect every time. I know that spending 10 minutes preparing my gate is one of the most important things I can do during a GP weekend. If you get a good start the race is so much easier."

And that's what Tommy sees as being the secret to a great season in '07 – consistently good starts. Now aware that he has the speed to compete against any rider in the MX2 class, getting out of the gate well is of paramount importance if Searle is to realise his ambitions of claiming his first GP win and ultimately a top three championship finish or better.

"My bike is so good this season that I'm confident I can get great starts all year. To get the holeshot every week, or at least a top three start, is going to bring me on even more – help me reach the next level. Even if Cairoli or someone passes me after the start then I'm going to be able to hang with them. It might only be for half the race initially but then it will be for three-quarters of the race until I'm able to race them for the whole moto.

"I have everything I need to win. I took a big step forward last year and I genuinely believe that I can do that again this season and win some races. At the moment I don't feel under any pressure at all. There's no reason why I should. I will just give my best every weekend and hopefully that will be good enough."



Giz Edmunds, Tommy's Molson mechanic, has moved with him across to KTM

SCREAMING BANANAS!

Take two great bikes, one good motocross track, a gregarious tester and a grumpy photographer then mix them all together for a day and you've got one hell of an explosive cocktail

Words by Tony Marshall Photos by Suttty



TWO-STROKE motocross bikes seem to be extinct at world championship level as the all-conquering short-stroke thumpers have taken control of both the MX1 and MX2 series. However, at centre level and below the oil-burners seem to be making a comeback as riders realise the added financial strain of running a four-popper just isn't worth the perceived benefit in performance.

And there could be another reason for the resurgence in sales – the DEP two-stroke British championship. Over 300 riders plus reserves have registered for the 17-race series so far disproving the Japanese manufacturers' theory that two-strokes are history.

Unfortunately, despite their on-track revival

in the UK, the big four have cut back on their two-stroke development budgets meaning your '07 smoker probably isn't much different from your '06 or '05 – this is certainly the case with the pair of Suzuki RMs which haven't seen any significant changes in the last couple of years.

In an effort to increase interest in their 2007 RM250, Suzuki GB have launched it onto showroom floors as a Ricky Carmichael replica. While there's nothing particularly performance enhancing in the kit, blinging gold SM Pro rims and a One Industries Makita graphics package – including gripper seat cover – transform the stock bike into a real thing of beauty. Mmmm Carmichael.

The 125 is left as Suzuki intended it to look

which isn't really a bad thing – if you like yellow of course. The fact that the running gear on the bike remains more or less untouched from '06 isn't a problem either as it was a totally stock – bar a DEP pipe – RM125 that won the DEP 125 Challenge underneath Ben Taylor proving there's still life left in the old dog – that's both Ben and the bike!

Speaking of old dogs, DBR's chief tester Tony D Marshall is knocking on a bit too – he's 32 this year – but with age comes experience and our boy has plenty of that – British championship race winner, GP glory-hunter and multi-time youth champion – and all in the era when two-strokes ruled the roost. If anyone knows their way around a 125 or 250cc

Keep it on the pipe and the 125 has got the guts to pull you through and out of just about anything



two-popper it's Lil' Tone and despite his increasing waistline he's one of the few magazine test riders we know who's still plenty light and quick enough to race a 125 competitively at the highest level.

To put the pair of bikes properly through their paces we used the excellent Essex MX facility that's just minutes from junction seven of the M11 near Chelmsford. Despite relentless rain in the days leading up to the test the circuit was in surprisingly good condition thanks to the tons of woodchips and sawdust that are mixed in with the indigenous soil to create deep, loamy conditions.

With two bikes, one track and an impatient tester all ready to rip we waited for a break in

the weather then went at it like crazy fools. Over to Tony D for his thoughts on Suzuki's '07 screaming bananas...

"With all tests I like to start with the bike that has the smallest engine and work my way up so that means it's the 125 which primarily gets my attention today. I spent a lot of years racing 125 two-strokes although to be honest most of my riding these days is done on 250 four-strokes.

"Suzuki have played a blinder with their '07 RM-Z250 – it's very light and feels closer to a 125 two-stroke than any other bike I've ridden. The 125 obviously feels light too – it's seven kilos lighter than the RM-Z – but unlike the thumper which feels quite flat I feel like I'm actually sat in the 125. This feeling is

accentuated by the braceless Renthal Fatbars which have quite a high bend.

"Out on the track the riding position feels okay and the first thing I really took notice of was the motor – it was jetted pretty much perfectly. From the way it looked I'd guess the bike we were testing had been well-used and abused but the motor was still surprisingly strong.

"The track conditions which were quite deep and boggy in places meant I had to work extra hard to get the best from the motor. This meant I had to keep revving it hard as the lack of bottom-end power made it all too easy to kill the motor in the deep berms. Saying that if you can keep it on the pipe the Suzuki has one of ►



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Suspension on the 250 is good and progressive



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"Deep conditions like these put a lot of strain on the drive-train and gearbox and I was pleased to find I could shift up through the gears easily enough even under full power – that's impressive. The clutch also handled the abuse I threw at it with the feel at the lever staying the same throughout.

"The suspension on the Suzuki is also spot on – the bike takes everything in its stride and feels well balanced and comfortable in turns, on rough straights and over jumps.

"The brakes are good too but then again I can't remember the last time I tested a bike with poor brakes – it was probably the '87 KX80 which had a rear drum brake or something...

"Moving on... The Carmichael replica 250 looks pretty sweet with the gold rims and graphics. The bigger RM has a sit-in feel too – this helps you feel more in control and the grippy One Industries seat cover helps as well as it keeps you firmly planted in the right place out of corners.

"Just like the 125 the 250 is jettied perfectly – it's good to know that the awful mid-range bogging problem from a year or so ago has been sorted. This bike pulls hard from right down low and keeps on ripping through the range – there's plenty of top-end available if you need it but personally I prefer to pop it up a gear and let the low to mid-range grunt do all the work.

"One thing I really like about the 250 is its ability to turn – the front end feels very positive and the bike seems equally happy taking fast outside or tight inside lines through corners. It's very impressive and I feel it's probably one of the best turning bikes there is.

"The suspension works well on the 250, both ends progressively soak up the bumps and jumps without getting close to bottoming out. High speed stability is good and it has to be with the amount of ponies the engine seems to produce. Everything else is spot on too – shifting, braking, gear changing, everything really. The bike as a package is a good one – definitely one of the finest 250 two-strokes available today."



For more pics of Tony Marshall testing the '07 Suzukis check out www.dirtbikerider.com

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Specifications

RM250
Capacity: 249cc
Bore and stroke: 66.4mm x 72mm
Transmission: Five-speed
Carburettor: Keihin PWK38S
Front suspension: Showa fork
Rear suspension: Showa shock
Front brake: Disc
Rear brake: Disc
Wheelbase: 1470mm
Seat height: 950mm
Dry weight: 96kg

bike test

A positive front end makes turning the 250 a pleasure



RM125
Capacity: 124cc
Bore and stroke: 54mm x 54.5mm
Transmission: Five-speed
Carburettor: Mikuni TMX38SS
Front suspension: Showa fork
Rear suspension: Showa shock
Front brake: Disc
Rear brake: Disc
Wheelbase: 1450mm
Seat height: 950mm
Dry weight: 87kg



THIRD BITE!



Businessman, father, extreme enduro racer – Wayne Braybrook's got a lot on his plate so it's a good job he's hungry to succeed at all three...

Words by Sean Lawless Photos by Jonty Edmunds



NOT EVERYONE is lucky enough to get even a second bite at the cherry so to go back for a third could be viewed as being just plain greedy – and the speed with which Wayne Braybrook disappears as soon as someone mentions lunch is a dead giveaway.

The trials rider turned enduro rider turned extreme enduro star has clearly got a healthy appetite – and not just for the delicacies dished out at the greasy spoon down the road from Gas Gas UK's Buxton HQ. Wayne's also got a hunger for victory at the very highest level of his chosen discipline, success that tastes all the sweeter coming as it does relatively late on in the 36-year-old's career.

"I wasn't the world's best trials rider and I'm certainly not the world's best enduro rider but combine the two..." says the big Yorkshireman. "I've found my niche and I need to capitalize on it."

Fresh from victory the previous weekend in the infamous Hell's Gate extreme enduro,

Braybrook's in typically laidback mood as he waits to hear when his 300cc Gasser – being brought from Italy by his mate Paul Bolton – will land back in the country.

His win at Hell's Gate is Wayne's first major victory in this relatively new discipline. And even the discomfort of a dislocated little finger – sustained early on in the Italian night race – can't wipe the smile from his face as he recalls the previous weekend's heroics.

With three-time winner David Knight choosing to race the Le Touquet beach race rather than defend his title, Wayne – runner-up in '05 and '06 – started favourite. The pressure was on!

"For two weeks before the event I was Mr Grizzly, worrying about things and making sure everything was right. Without Kev [Hipwell] here at Gas Gas I couldn't have got the bike ready – the time and effort that Shirty and Kev have put into getting the bike ready has been mega – but I've still done a lot of the

bits and bats myself, getting fancy exhaust guards made and stuff like that just to make sure we get through the event.

"It's the first time in my life I've ever had to go to an event expecting to win and it wasn't a comfortable feeling and I was nowhere near as relaxed as I should have been. I knew I was a better rider than everybody else there and I had the best package this year – lights, bike, support – to win the event."

Of course, starting favourite also has its advantages. "I've never been in a position before where I'm the spectacle of the event – it's bizarre for me because I'm a fairly humble person. At Hell's Gate the mechanic wouldn't even let me pick anything up – it's a surreal experience!"

So he rose to the occasion, did the business, delivered the goods, brought home the bacon blah, blah, blah but the million dollar question is would the result have been the same if Knighter – Wayne's extreme

Hell's Gate '05 and Wayne grits his teeth and forces the 250X up the final hill to second place



In the beginning

The trials years...

"My dad had a trials bike but he only ever did two trials. But we used to live on the same estate as Stuart Feeney from Appleyards so he always had loads of bikes and I spent a lot of time with them as a family.

"My dad spent a lot of time and what money he had taking me where he could – he used to take me to nationals even though I wasn't really any good at them. We just kept plugging away and then I started getting a few decent results.

"My first biggish win was at the YMSA two-day trial at Harwood Dale on a 175 Majesty. Something clicked and I started being able to ride stuff properly. I did Junior Kickstart that year – it was '85 or '86 – and I finished second to David Lloyd and beat Rob Sartin and that on the Majesty and they were all on mono Yams.

"I did my first year in the adults on a mono Yam from Appleyards and then in '88 John Lampkin helped me out and I went onto Betas and rode for John Boy until '91. They were good times. When I was 18 I decided to have a go at the world rounds when John had that Screenart support. I travelled abroad with Robert Crawford. We were getting a bit of help with sponsorship with diesel money and ferries and did all the world rounds. It was mega –

happy days – but I never achieved what I wanted to do and that was score world championship points, the nearest I got was 16th.

"In 1990 and '91 I started getting some half decent results and obviously going well in the Scott Trial and stuff and there were a few people pricking their ears up. Jim Sandiford offered me a deal, so did Shirty and I actually tested Aprilia for Malc and out of those three at the time the Gas Gas was the best bike to have.

"Joe [his son] came along in 1995 and I just sort of ticked over with my riding – all the young kids were coming along and I wasn't able to spend the time abroad. About '95, '96 I was still wanting to be competitive but a lot of the young kids who'd come along were starting to beat me on a regular basis – I knew I could still ride but I couldn't dedicate myself to riding and all the rest of it.

"In '96 and '97 I was working for a courier company doing 12-hour days just trying to get money together. I certainly wasn't practising – I just didn't have time to do it, especially when Joe came along. Then I did a couple of hare and hounds, did really well and thought 'I can do this'."

"Whadyamean I look like Dan Clark?" Wayne enjoys a post-race interview after winning Hell's Gate

enduro nemesis – had competed?

"If David had been at Hell's Gate this year it would have been close but in all fairness he would've had the edge because I slipped off on the first lap and dislocated my finger."

Wayne and Knighter are firm friends but while the Yorkshireman has never beaten the Manxman in an extreme enduro he's edging closer and closer – and starting to fancy his chances!

"The first year [at Hell's Gate] I didn't know what I was doing and just went there on a 250X Honda and rode and did okay. I finished second but I was 20 minutes behind David. Everyone's in awe of him but ultimately no-one had ever pushed him in the extreme side of things.

"It's very tongue-in-cheek with me and David because we have a laugh – during the trials race at the Tough One he was running into the course and throwing stones at me. But when we're racing David knows what the job is and we both give as good as we get.

"I've got the utmost respect for David, we get on really good and have a real laugh together. If it weren't for David in the extreme side of things I would have it my own way so he's been a bit of a fly in the ointment but I've enjoyed chasing him – especially at Hell's Gate in '06. I was putting pressure on him

from the word go and he was flapping and I was thinking 'hang on, you've got him on the run a bit here, he's panicking'.

"He's never had any problems in extreme events, it's always gone good so if he's ever had to fix anything he's always had a 10, 15, 20-minute lead. So when I managed to push him – I overtook him up the first stream and probably pulled about a minute on him – it was at that point I knew he could be beaten.

"If someone can run with him it's a whole new thing for David to have to deal with because he's had it his own way and he's been very relaxed in his riding and never had to worry about anyone. He knows that I'm one of the few people who can actually push him because of the trials experience.

"Even at the Tough One this year I made a point of digging my wheel in where I needed to so he knew that I was there – the problem with that was I rode the trials race as well and was knackered.

"I had three or four laps at the Tough One running with him and banging bars then I got stuck behind a rider and David was able to pull a bit of time on me – he then had that cushion and that mental edge thinking 'he's not with me'. The thing with extreme events is that they're very, very intense and you don't have a lot of room for error which is why when

A crash put paid to Wayne's ambitions of winning the speed trials class at The Tough One



Scott Shots

Wayne's Y2K Win

In a riding career stretching all the way back to his first trial in 1979 there are two stand-out moments for Wayne – Hell's Gate this year and the Scott Trial in Y2K. Of the two it was his Scott win that was the longest overdue...

"I'd been top three for seven or eight years on the trot – I'd been very consistent but not actually managed to win it. And to be honest in probably '96 or '97 I thought 'I ain't going to win it now, that's it' and then when I did finally win it I'd done enduros all year and the only trial I'd done had been Scotland. I was mega, mega fit through doing enduros and I just rode the trial and couldn't put a foot wrong.

"I had a front wheel puncture so I didn't set standard time but apart from that it couldn't have gone any better. I'd been trying for 13 years to win it and being a Yorkshireman I was desperate to win it. At the presentation that night I said I'm not doing this again and I went away and didn't ride for the next few years.

"I just went watching it but it used to frustrate me. There were these young hotshots and they weren't prepared to race round, they were happy enough to ride round and save their energy but no-one was racing – for me it's a race and you've got to have a go from the minute the flag drops.

"I got itchy feet again and when the four-stroke Mont came out I was desperate to ride it in '04 but they wouldn't let me because it was still pre-production. So '05 was the first year I rode again and I finished third. Obviously, I'm in my middle years but I knew damn well I could get a result because I was fit and I know how to ride around the trial. I spent years walking round bits of the course and learning it.

"Last year on the Gasser it was a real last minute thing and I finished second two marks away from Dougie and it shouldn't happen like that – I'd had two hours on the bike beforehand. It's a unique event and you've got to know your onions, you've got to know what you're on with to ride it.

"You've got to be knackered when you finish that event – a lot of kids, so-called hotshots, are like spring chickens at the end. Well, they've not been trying."

With Knighter in France, Wayne started favourite to win Hell's Gate this year – and he didn't disappoint

David does have a problem I'm going to be on him."

This is as good a point as any to bring up Wayne's trials background as it's something he feels plays a vital part in his – and Knighter's – success in extreme enduros. As a veteran and past winner of the Scott Trial – arguably once the most hardcore one-day dirt bike event on the planet – Braybrook's trials pedigree is unquestionable. And the skills he honed right the way through the schoolie ranks and across three seasons in the WTC are key to his new-found success.

"You can count on one hand the amount of people who can ride an enduro bike to a decent speed and trials very well. And probably four out of the five I can think of are British. I know I've got that combination and then there's Paul Eddy, Knighter and Graham Jarvis. Graham hasn't got enough speed yet but he can ride a trials bike and if you can ride a trials bike like Graham can then you can turn your hand to pretty much anything else."

Of course, you can have all the bike handling skills in the world but if you haven't got the testicular fortitude – aka balls – to keep pushing through and beyond the pain barrier you're not going to get very far in the world of extreme enduros. Luckily, Wayne wasn't brought up to be a quitter.

"I've got the greatest respect in the world for my dad – he's always been a grafter and he's always said 'don't ever give in, you never know what's going to happen'. I hate being beaten by anything. Last Man Standing was the only time in my career where I've been close to chucking the towel in but that was due to exhaustion."

Staged in Texas, the Red Bull Last Man Standing extreme enduro is an elimination event that last year after separate day and night stages saw 128 starters whittled down to just two finishers – yep, you got it, Knighter and Wayne.

"It's a 33-mile lap. It took three-and-a-half hours in the morning and took me four hours at night. To do 33 miles is nothing but it's so physical lifting and carrying your bike and I was stuck and I couldn't get out. Exhausted. At that point I thought I'd had enough. And then I thought 'no, I can't do that, I've come all this way and spent all this money...' so somehow I managed to get up this hill and then there were about another four the same and I don't know what I did but I just hit them as hard as I could and somehow just ricocheted to the top.

Leading Knighter in last year's The Tough One



"I'm a fairly proud man and I wouldn't ever want to let anybody down. I've been involved with motocross riders business-wise over the years and I find it very frustrating when they sometimes pull off the track with a bent lever or something. I can't get my head around it because in enduros or trials there isn't an option – you have to keep going.

"I've got a fairly decent natural ability to ride a bike over any terrain but at the same time I won't let anything beat me and I think you've got to have that to be successful at



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WEC and GNCC

One-off outings?

"The WEC now I'd be interested in doing simply because with the introduction of extreme tests and proper cross country tests I think I could do well at them. Two or three years ago I would have said no because it was very much motocross-based.

"Gas Gas have already asked this year about me doing some Spanish championships and obviously they're running Patrick Caps and Fred Bolley in world championships and I'm guessing that if either of them get injured then they'll be on the phone. And yes I would be interested and yes I would ride but again I've got to think about work and I've commitments with Joe so I wouldn't be throwing myself to the lions, I'd ride within myself and I'm sure I could get results but, ultimately, it's not high on my priority list."

And what about America? "I wouldn't want to race a season there because it would do my head in but the effort, time and money they put into events is phenomenal. They've already said if they pick a technical, rough, hard GNCC would I come and, yes, I'd love to. If it stacks up and I can get over there and someone will pick me up and take me to the race then brilliant, let's do it. I'll fly anywhere in the world a couple of days before a race as long as it doesn't interfere with my commitments to Joe and to work."

It's not called Hell's Gate for nothing

extreme events."

So far so good and you'd be forgiven for thinking that Wayne doesn't have any chinks in his armour. But while Knighter's a full-time pro who can dedicate himself 24/7 to training, testing and racing, Wayne's a devoted dad with a business – Braybrook Off-Road – to run which places him at a serious disadvantage.

"I'm not as fit and I can't dedicate as much time to it as David can because that's what he does for a living but I enjoy knowing I can push him and, I've said loads of times on the podium, there's no shame in playing second fiddle to David Knight. But I do want to beat him one day and it will come, I'm convinced!

"In the Last Man Standing we didn't have the best light set-up and the bike was just an old world championship bike that had been left there from the WEC. This year I'll be shipping a bike over there because technically I know I'm as good as David, I've maybe not got his brute strength or his speed but I can make up for that with what I've got in my noggin.

"I'm a great believer in if you go into something with the right attitude you've got a chance of doing well. I've never been one to be negative about things, especially these extreme events – because I know I'm good at them I'm very, very positive.

"And above all you've got to keep a clear head and stay calm. I'm 37 in March and I think I've seen that much happen

In BEC action in '05 – not extreme enough for Wayne!

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competition-wise I'm able to deal with a lot of things. All right, there are odd times when I have a bit of a flap – at Hell's Gate this weekend just gone I'd made a hash of the test and I had a little girly tantrum sat on my own in the middle of the awning, they sorted the bike out and I came back and thought 'right, switch your head on again'. We all have little flips like that but ultimately I do feel I'm mentally stronger now than I ever have been."

And that's possibly the final piece of the puzzle that's helped make Wayne a winner in extreme enduros – the sort of maturity that only comes from hard-won experience.

"I remember my dad asking in the early '90s would I like to have a go at enduros and at the time I had absolutely no interest in getting on an enduro bike. He never asked again and I look back now and wonder what could have happened if I'd started earlier. But I have found my niche and while in some ways my aches and pains being this age are a bit of a problem I keep looking at Ady Smith and he's a good bit older than me and still riding competitive.

"And I do think with extreme enduros it's probably similar to Dakar – you've got to have the experience, it's no good putting a young gun on a bike in that kind of event because he will trash it. There's so much emphasis on preservation – of the bike and yourself – in an extreme enduro. In the whole time I've been riding since 1979 I think I've only ever not

finished four events and three of them were because of injury and one was a breakdown.

"When you're riding the Scottish Six Days and the Scott you've got to preserve your bike and I think taking that mentality through into the extreme side of things is what's getting me the results. A lot of the motocross guys come along and are very quick lads but they can't string three hours together – they either hit a tree or break their bike.

"I'm very, very bike fit – I never, ever go to the gym and do any training because I just don't have the time – and I'm fairly economical on a bike, I don't make it hard work which helps. It's all down to preservation and it's not something you can teach, it's down to a lot of years of riding."

So, what's in store in the future for Wayne? Well, despite his advancing years his timing's pretty good and in a discipline that's just establishing itself he's just established himself as one of the best in the world.

"Extreme enduros are gathering momentum all the time – in the last few years they're getting big money in and KTM and Red Bull are obviously heavily involved as well. Pepe Pou [Gas Gas racing team manager] at the factory is very keen to get me into doing these events.



Wayne ran DK close at last year's Hell's Gate

"The indoor enduros are very trials orientated – if you can stand up and ride a bike fast then you can do well. I would like to be a position certainly within the next 12 or 18 months where I can ride all the extreme events and the indoors.

"The big challenge this year is Erzberg – I've never done it and I'm doing it this year. I can really, really push hard there – I'm looking forward to it because I know it will suit me. A couple of people who've ridden have said I've got a very, very good chance of beating David there because it's such a short race and so intense. I am desperate to beat him fair and square and David will be the first to shake my hand if I do."

WIDE OPEN!

An unbeatable work rate helped carry Stefan Everts to 10 world titles so it's hardly surprising that even in 'retirement' KTM's new race director is still putting in the hours

Words and photos by Alex Hodgkinson

AFTER A record 10 world titles, Stefan Everts swapped the saddle for a job in management at the end of last year. Seven weeks into his new role as KTM race director, the 34-year-old spoke to DBR about his first impressions of his new 'desk' job

DBR: Now you're retired are you still busy?

SE: "Yes, I'm still very busy. The way I have worked the last few years has been too much so I needed a break. That was one of the reasons I stopped racing. I wanted to be a bit more relaxed with more time for the family. Living under that pressure for such a long time, I was just tired of it."

"I was hoping to have a bit more free time but every week comes something new. I have been down in Spain for many weeks giving some schools and with all of the KTM team riders and now the racing season has started."

DBR: Has it been hard to stop racing after 18 years?

SE: "It's not so bad as I expected. Probably Namur and the Motocross des Nations will be the hardest weekends for me – I think I will have a lot of stomach pain when I am there and not racing."

DBR: Have you kept up your fitness?

SE: "It's not that good anymore but I can still last 20-25 minutes riding. I even did one time 30 minutes on a hard track. I'm not going to race with them at Lommel anymore but it's not too bad. I did a lot of training since Christmas and we rode quite a lot together. Also I did some of the physical training with them. But I've already had two weeks off since that and I notice it." ▶

The master keeps a watchful eye on one of his students in Spain



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Stefan's still capable of turning it on although the legendary fitness has dropped off a bit



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DBR: Any regrets at taking the job with KTM?

SE: "No, I am enjoying it up until now. We had a great time in Spain with the riders."

I tried to train hard with the guys but also to have some time off, some relaxation. We went bowling, we went sky-diving, cycling, a lot of things – but we did it as a group to build up team spirit."

DBR: Tell us about your riders.

SE: "They are four different characters with different personalities. But we have only been together for three weeks so far and I need more time. Everybody is different and has different needs so what is working for

Tyla is not automatically working for Jonathan. I really have to look more individually at the guys now. Every rider has their good and bad things and I have to help each of them

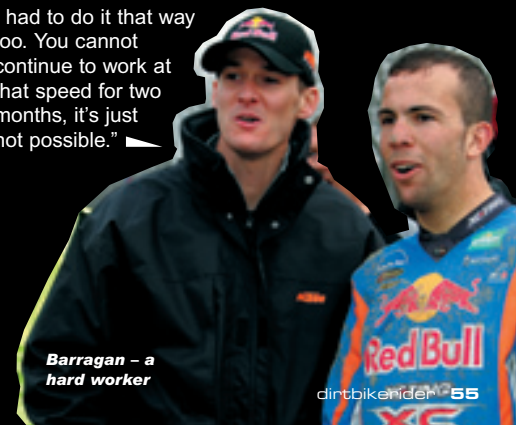
individually too.

"To go out riding with them was one of the things I still wanted to do. I am trying to teach them to help each other, to motivate each other to move to the next level. It's very hard to simulate the race during the week. It's always a big difference to Sunday. But riding together makes that gap smaller."

"They are still at an age where they can ride more in the week but I want them to listen to their body and say no, particularly when the GP season starts. I prefer to do one quality training during the week than three half-hearted sessions"

"Jonathan [Barragan] is a pretty closed personality. He's a hard worker but he keeps himself to himself. He needs to open up a little more. Tommy [Searle] is still very young. It's really nice to see his enthusiasm. He is still green behind the ears and it was fun to see the other guys teasing him. But he's a great talent, great ability, big potential. He still needs to work a lot on his physical condition but he's only 18. David [Philippaerts] is in good shape and is always trying 100 per cent. But he is very aggressive on the bike. We have to try to get it a bit smoother so that he doesn't waste so much energy but that is part of his style."

"We call Tyla 'Bull'. He is like a pitbull, he just wants to go and go and go. He worked very hard during those three weeks. He is riding good and the big thing now is to get his mind straight that you win a title over a whole season, not in single races. I'm sure he will take off really fast but we have to keep his mind together. But I find he is listening and I think he already improved since the end of last year. He worked so hard and was tired after a couple of weeks but I expected that. You can't keep it up non-stop and he had to slow down for a week. I know how it is because I had to do it that way too. You cannot continue to work at that speed for two months, it's just not possible."



Barragan – a hard worker



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Eye Witness

Tyla talks...

"We were together for three weeks in Spain and everything went really positively. Riding together was good preparation. It was like a race, pushing each other all the time and Stefan was riding with us too for a little while. But he would pull off after 25 minutes, he couldn't do it any more."

"Even more important, there were some cool vibes. We were like a family. We went sky-diving together, we ate together and it built up a team spirit. But Stefan made us work hard. After two weeks I was exhausted and had to take a week off!"

Rattray - like a pitbull



DBR: Max Nagl and Markus Schiffer joined you too for the tests. What was your impression?

SE: "Max really surprised me on the 450, riding well and doing good lap times. And he also worked hard, doing a lot of 40-minute motos. He's a workaholic and he rides very smoothly. Markus is a great talent but he still needs to do a lot of work. His riding ability reminds me a lot of Marco Dorsch."

DBR: How do you rate your successor at Yamaha, Josh Coppins?

SE: "Josh is the favourite and the pressure is on his camp. Everybody expects them to win. Yamaha and me won the title together for six years and Josh made such a good comeback from his injury last year – on the podium every week, beating me in Ireland. I too expect him to be fast and strong but everybody is beatable."

"It was on the one side a surprise that Yamaha took De Reuver and on the other side not. Yamaha Europe is based in Holland so it was interesting for them to have a Dutch rider in the team after so many years with Belgians with me, Marnicq and Cedric. And Marc is also a great rider with a lot of talent. His possibilities are enormous but in the end it has to come

down to the hard work. I think Josh is a hard worker but Marc has more talent."

DBR: Who are KTM's other rivals?

SE: "For sure I expect a lot of Kevin [Strijbos] and Steve [Ramon]. They are both a year older and for both of them they can now come out of the shadows because Smets and me are no longer there. I think they can make it difficult for Josh."

"And Ken [De Dycker]. I think he still needs one or two more years experience but for sure he can race for GP wins. He still has to learn how to control himself and pace himself for a complete race. He can be incredibly fast for a few laps but he then blows himself out. When you want to be on top, you have to ride consistent laps for the entire race. He needs to learn that."

"I think it is a new experience for MacKenzie with a new team and a new class so I think we must wait and see. But Tanel [Leok] will be strong this year. He dropped a little out of the limelight last year as he struggled with his shoulder and other influences and he lost direction but I think he is back on the right track."



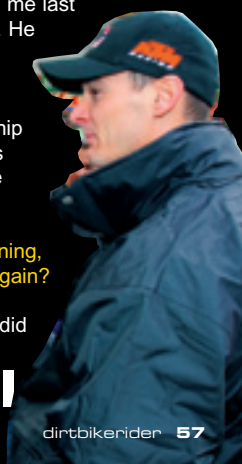
DBR: And in MX2?

SE: "I think Pourcel and Cairoli are very close to each other. For sure Pourcel will be even stronger than last year – more confident – but Cairoli desperately wants to get his title back. I know how that feels and he will be really motivated. Last year he put in some really good races and on average he was the fastest but he blew it a few times. And hopefully Tyla can be in the fight there."

"Goncalves also impressed me last year. He did some good races. He could start well, ride smooth and consistent but he couldn't quite keep it together for 40 minutes. But then he got that hip injury in New Zealand and has broken his collarbone since he got back to Europe."

DBR: If the KTMs are not winning, do you get out the #72 plate again?

SE: "I'm not riding. I have too much to lose. I can't win like I did before. It's a matter of pride, honour, respect and I don't want to lose that."





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GASTRONOMICAL!

Clarky f-f-feasts on five Gassers and finds them to be oh-so tasty!

Words by Dan Clark Photos by Sully



2006 WAS a helluva year for Gas Gas and their all-conquering trials team. El cocky Catalan Adam Raga did the business for the Girona factory both indoors and out at WTC level while Daniel Gibert won the Juniors and Alexz Wigg cleaned up in the 125cc Youth division. All-in-all a successful year for the Spanish marque and a good indicator of how competitive their '06 TXT Pro range was.

For 2007 the Gas Gas range has only undergone a handful of changes. The first of these are cosmetic – the frames are now black rather than chrome and there are some tasty new graphics. Other changes include internal engine mods, new exhaust pipes, gearbox and clutch mods, new Sachs shocks, a floating front disc, new footrest brackets and the greatest improvement of all – all-new cheaper prices!

In my opinion Gas Gas bikes are among the easiest bikes to maintain and ride on the market today – they're incredibly light and with an abundance of different engine sizes to choose from there's something to suit every trials rider. Let's start with the smallest and work up! ▶

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The 125cc Gasser is aimed at 12-17 year olds and it's definitely in contention for the award of best 125 bike on the market! The power is incredible – it revs beyond belief and can pull man and machine up the biggest of rocks. But, even at lower RPM, this bike doesn't feel like it wants to stall or give up. When you lay the power down the bike really gets drive and if your body position is in the right place with you and the bike working as one you'll get anywhere.

The suspension on the 125 and 200 is the same as last year's models. This isn't a bad thing as another glance at my test of the zero-sixers (which is available online at www.dirtbikerider.com) confirmed that my thoughts then were the same as they are now – the suspension at both ends is totally dialled in.

The 200cc Gas Gas is also a fantastic bike but I get a little bit confused over which market it's actually aimed at. Obviously it's 75cc too big for schoolies so I can only assume it's for any adult starting out in trials or the clubman rider who doesn't want anything that might get away from them. The power delivery is really soft but the motor also has plenty of punch for the bigger stuff if needed.

The 250 is an awesome all-round bike – the power is nice and smooth and the bike delivers great grip to the rear wheel thanks to its clean carburation. This bike is almost the same as last year with the only obvious difference being the aluminium front forks which look great anodised in black.

The rear suspension on the Gassers uses a linkage system unlike the Betas, Scorpas and all which have the shock mounted directly to the swinging arm. While the rear suspension on the Gas Gas range works perfectly well it's worth remembering that you will have to check and grease the linkage every so often.

Just to prove I'm not a forgetful dumbass I'd like to state that each and every bike in the entire '07 Gas Gas range comes complete with a perfectly flat sump guard – I thank you...

If you like a bike with a perfectly flat sump guard and plenty of power then the 280 could be the one for you. Probably suited more for expert riders, the 280 can do a lot of harm in the wrong hands so for most clubmen I'd say the 300 would be their weapon of choice.

Like the 200 the 300 is a bike that most riders would try and either loathe or love. As soon as you fire this bike up you can tell it's a 300 by the sound its sweet silencer makes – it's really deep and grunty.

As a clubman class machine it delivers plenty of smooth, docile power which feels a little tamer off the bottom than the 280. A good – or bad – rider can just jump on this, put it in a high gear and plod along using the bottom-end power which is really the best way to use this weapon.

Something special Introducing the Raga replica...

The 125 model is also available as a Raga replica for an extra 383 notes and a handful of shrapnel. For the extra money you'll get a super-trick gold magnesium swingarm and crankcase covers as well as uprated suspension – the same as on the Pro 250. All-in-all it's an absolutely ideal weapon for advanced riders or anyone who wants something that's a little bit trick.



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Rear suspension:	Sachs
Front brake:	185mm disc
Rear brake:	150mm disc
Carburettor:	Dell'Orto PHBL26BS
Gearbox:	Six-speed
Wheelbase:	1330mm
Dry weight:	68kg
Retail price:	£3,100.34

TXT 200 PRO

Capacity:	175.3cc
Bore and stroke:	64mm x 54.5mm
Front suspension:	40mm Marzocchi
Rear suspension:	Sachs
Front brake:	185mm disc
Rear brake:	150mm disc
Carburettor:	Dell'Orto PHBL26BS
Gearbox:	Six-speed
Wheelbase:	1330mm
Dry weight:	68kg
Retail price:	£3,181.96



TXT 250 PRO

Capacity:	247.7cc
Bore and stroke:	72.5mm x 60mm
Front suspension:	40mm Marzocchi
Rear suspension:	Sachs
Front brake:	185mm disc
Rear brake:	150mm disc
Carburettor:	Dell'Orto PHBL26BS
Gearbox:	Six-speed
Wheelbase:	1330mm
Dry weight:	68kg
Retail price:	£3,400

TXT 280 PRO

Capacity:	272.2cc
Bore and stroke:	76mm x 60mm
Front suspension:	40mm Marzocchi
Rear suspension:	Sachs
Front brake:	185mm disc
Rear brake:	150mm disc
Carburettor:	Dell'Orto PHBL26BS
Gearbox:	Six-speed
Wheelbase:	1330mm
Dry weight:	68kg
Retail price:	£3,450

TXT 300 PRO

Capacity:	294.1cc
Bore and stroke:	79mm x 60mm
Front suspension:	40mm Marzocchi
Rear suspension:	Sachs
Front brake:	185mm disc
Rear brake:	150mm disc
Carburettor:	Dell'Orto PHBL26BS
Gearbox:	Six-speed
Wheelbase:	1330mm
Dry weight:	68kg
Retail price:	£3,500



1983, AND 'ROLLS
NOYCE' WAS STILL
WINNING IN HIS LAST
GP FOR HONDA IN
HOLLAND.

GOLDEN GRAHAM!

With five British titles and the '79 world 500cc crown to his name, Graham Noyce – who's just notched up his half-century – was a wildman on a bike and even wilder off one!

Words and photos by Jack Burnicle

THE NEW Year Birthday Honours List featured two of Britain's all-time off-road legends as they turned 50 within four weeks of each other.

First, Neil Hudson – our 1981 world 250cc champion – celebrated with a party down in his native West Country on January 20. This bash was attended by his great rival Graham Noyce, who duly turned 50 himself on February 18. And however 'Noycey' chose to celebrate, you can bet the beer flowed.

They are two characters of immense contrast. While 'Nellie' Hudson is a shy, retiring man who shunned the limelight, Graham Noyce lived life in the fast lane. His admission, at Hudson's birthday party, that nobody could rail a corner like Nellie is probably the kindest compliment 'Rolls Noyce' has ever paid another rider.

A streetwise kid from rural Hampshire with a leathery, chain-smoking dad called Tom, 17-year-old Noyce exploded on to the adult UK racing scene in 1974 riding a Rickman Metisse with handlebars the width of the M1.

Metisse manufacturer Don Rickman – tall, willowy winner of the 1966 British 500GP – knew a thing or two about talent. And this raw teenager, who had started out on a BSA Bantam, had it! But while Don had been (and still is!) a polite English gentleman, Noycey was a tearaway who without any respect for reputations terrorised more experienced campaigners with his full-bore belligerence.

Even Roger Harvey, already a relative veteran of 23, rebuked the vivid newcomer at Berkshire's annual 'Battle of Newbury' in late '74. "Ere, young Noycey, just you slow down a bit!"

But Graham never did. In 1975 he initially rode 125 GPs for Brian Leask at Husqvarna before being poached by another man who knew life on the edge. Bryan 'Badger' Goss, importer of the successful Maico marque, was himself a maverick motocrosser who once dominated an MX des at Brands Hatch. Goss signed Graham to ride the new 400cc, five-speed factory Maico and entered him as a wildcard at Hawkstone Park's 500GP.

The dashing blue-eyed blond bucked his Maico into second place behind world champion Heikki Mikkola and engaged in a rousing 30-minute joust with 1974 British 500 grand prix winner Jaak van Velthoven (Yamaha) until he caught a flailing leg in his own swingarm!

That year also witnessed the birth of the British Open championship in which Noyce clashed dramatically with old stagers Vic Allan, Vic Eastwood and John Banks. The title chase went all the way to a thrilling finale at Bury St Edmunds where Noyce crashed in practice, broke his collarbone and cheerfully strutted around with his arm in a sling, already convinced he'd dominate the whole shooting match for the next four years!

The 500GP big guns soon became better acquainted



SATISFIED NOYCE
AFTER WINNING FIRST
500 GP OF 1983
AT PAYERNE, IN
SWITZERLAND

with this British Lion. He stormed through a full 1976 season – already second in Austria, Germany and the USA (imagine what the Yanks made of him at Carlsbad!) – before winning his first moto at Dodington Park, near Bristol, beating the factory Suzukis of Roger de Coster and Gerrit Wolsink.

Fourth overall that year, a knee injury thwarted him in 1977 when he missed four rounds and slipped to eighth in the table, recovering to mount the rostrum at the final round in Switzerland. British champion for a second time, he did enough to impress the Honda Racing Corporation who hired him alongside Brad Lackey for 1978.

Further injury and a seventh place finish didn't deter Honda and in 1979 he dramatically clinched Big Red's first ever world motocross crown. Combining the consistency of '76 with his fearsome determination, Noyce scored points in every moto until Namur when the title was assured. He only secured one overall victory – that famous boiling hot day at Farleigh Castle when my newly acquired beige 2002 Beemer broke down at Hungerford and I never arrived! Later that year I raced Noyce away from Hawkstone Park one Sunday night. "Ere, Jack, you still got that wood-burning BMW?" he demanded to know next time we met!

His loose lifestyle, binge drinking and catalogue of beautiful women somehow never, at 22, compromised his spectacular career. His huge fan base loved the well-earned wildman image. I travelled to the West German round at Beuern with Dave Nicoll in his elderly diesel Merc. Come Sunday evening we found ourselves struggling to make our ferry at Calais, having detoured via Eindhoven to drop off Graham's latest conquest and wait, fidgeting, outside in the dark until he'd done!

He virtually clinched the championship



was armed with his mum's Kodak Brownie camera. After art college he mixed life as a graphic designer, magazine art director, photographer and part-time art college tutor with motocross and photo-journalism. Now he's a commentator, painting pictures with words. He never did get a proper job...

JACK BURNICLE is the godfather (our words, not his) of British MX journalism. Born in Billingham, County Durham, to Bella and nutty (his words, not ours) musical genius Stan Burnicle, Jack was mad about cars and motor racing as a kid. At sweet 16 he got a motorbike, rode it to a local 'scramble' and was instantly, hopelessly hooked. Next time he went he



NOYCE
1982 BELGIAN GP, LEYS
PAST MONUMENT CAFE

2

DESCRIPTION SIGNALEMENT

Beaver	Titulaire	★Wife	Femme
Occupation	GRAPHIC DESIGNER		
Place of birth	BILLINGHAM		
Place of birth	BILLINGHAM		
Date of birth	9/3/47		

Jack Burnicle

Usual signature of beaver
Signature du titulaire

Usual signature of wife



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APRILIA	RKV 450/550	2007	FROM £3899	HONDA	CRF 250	2007	£4599	KAWASAKI	KX 85 S/W	2007	BEST	SUZUKI	RMZ 250	2007	£4199				
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HONDA	CRF 150 S/W	2007	£2999	KAWASAKI	KX 85 S/W	2006	£1999	KAWASAKI	KX 250	2007	ALL IN STOCK	YAMAHA	YZ 250F	2007	£4499				
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**SWOOPING TO VICTORY IN THE
1979 BRITISH AND WORLD 500 GP
CHAMPIONSHIPS, NOYCE WINS
AT HIGHER ROCOMBE**

against nearest rival Wolsink in an incredible Dutch GP at Markelo when he tailed the home favourite throughout race one and – plastered in damp, black sand – snatched victory by a bike length on the final lap. Apparently a wayward 'Foamin' Bob Wright on his CCM had unwittingly baulked Wolsink.

That was the weekend Bob – sheepishly clad in brand new red, white and blue 'TT Leathers' that looked about as comfortable as coloured concrete – received a typical Noyce welcome. "What 'ave you got on the back of 'em, Bob?" he smirked. "Summink good, like c**t, 'ave yer?" With Rolls Noyce you always got it straight!

Sunday night in Namur and world championship celebrations almost ended in tragedy with Pete Mathia rescuing a dangerously inebriated, helpless Hampshireman from the dark waters of the River Meuse. Yet a fortnight later, fastest man on track at Ruskeasanta in Finland, he led Dave Nicoll's Great Britain squad to a glorious second place behind Belgium in the Motocross des Nations. That night we somehow found ourselves charging through the woods in Kent Ohlins' truck, Graham at the helm as Kent rolled around wrecked on the floor!

"But I was at my best in 1980," he insists, despite a pre-season shoulder dislocation. He also broke his toe in a tremendous British championship duel with Harvey at Corsham ("You wouldn't believe how hard he is to race against, Jack" admitted Roger after losing narrowly) and tied the Finnish GP, at his beloved Ruskeasanta, with new Honda team-mate Andre Malherbe. Then a hideous mid-air collision over a fast jump off the start in Italy badly broke Graham's leg.

He was still on crutches at the final round in

Luxembourg when he declined to attend Andre's title-winning party. "I don't really want to go and toast Malherbe for winning my championship, do I, Jack?" he said, fixing me with his blue eyes.

He lost the British title that year too but recovered to take Malherbe to the wire in 1981, losing by just seven points after 24 hard-fought races. "I never really regained my confidence that year after breaking my leg," he admitted later, though he won in Sweden and again aided Great Britain to a brilliant second in the MX des despite being so hungover during Saturday qualifying that he faded from first to joint last in his heat!

A week after losing to Malherbe, he generously turned up in Apeldoorn to support Nellie Hudson's successful last-ditch attempt on the 250 crown. Then the pair faced off for the British Open series at Lyng where he felt he had a point to prove by beating the new 250 world champion and duly nicked his fifth and final national title.

Rolls Noyce won more GPs, in Sweden in 1982 and the Swiss opener of '83 where I sat in his motorhome with pretty new American wife Pam after practice. Through the window he heartily hailed agricultural journeyman Walter Gruhler, a moustachioed German traditionalist who wore socks inside his sandals. And as Gruhler, puffed with pride at Noyce's greeting, shambled amiably off into the setting sun, Graham winked at me. "You never know when you might want guys like Walter on your side if you're coming up to lap 'em!"

**1980 – LEADING TEAM-
MATE ROGER
DE COSTER IN FRENCH GP:**



**"I WAS AT MY BEST
EARLY IN 1980" HE SAYS.**

He beat Malherbe in a tie-breaker the following day, then gleefully sank a cellar full of red wine and wrecked a local restaurant that night. I still can see the shocked patron, who had treated Graham like an old friend.

Graham salvaged a distant third in the 1983 championship – even winning the penultimate race of the year at St Anthonis – but his hedonistic, rock n' roll lifestyle began to take its toll. Released by Honda from his 140-grand a year deal, Noyce rode briefly for KTM before vanishing mysteriously before the French GP!

Finally, after failing to make the cut at Markelo on a private Honda in 1985, Rolls Noyce called time. "I'm not gonna ride round struggling to qualify, Jack," he announced over the customary Sunday night beer and, true to his word, he was gone.

One of the last of the old school, revered by fans and fellow riders, Graham Noyce has somehow made it safely through to 50. Belated birthday greetings, Noycey. And here's to the next half century!



BRACE YOURSELF!

Once every so often a product comes along which genuinely enhances our sport – say hello to the Leatt-Brace...

Words by Geoff Walker

THERE'S ONLY one thing worse than DNFing a race because of mechanical breakdown and that's not finishing because of personal injury. Injuries in motocross and enduro are a bad thing and if there's anything that can be done to prevent them then it's gotta be worth looking at.

One such injury prevention device that's much hyped and often talked about is the Leatt-Brace. This is one such product which could potentially save riders from suffering horrific neck and spinal injuries which is why off-road fan and former neurosurgeon Dr Chris Leatt spent years developing the brace in his homeland of South Africa.

At the time of writing the Leatt-Brace is the only neck protection system available for off-road sport that can effectively help prevent

Kevin Windham used a
Leatt-Brace at San Diego



© hoppenworld.com



Karl Prestwood sets to
work fitting the brace
to a young Elvis



The brace can also be
worn under a riding
shirt for those worried
about appearances

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the following potential injuries — hyperflexion (extreme forward head movement), hyperextension (extreme rearward head movement), lateral hyperflexion (extreme sideways head movement), axial loading (compression of the spinal column) and posterior hypertranslation (rearward movement of the head/helmet on the neck). Dr Leatt claims his brace (when fitted properly) can help protect against all of these types of injury — impressive stuff.

The Leatt-Brace basically works by bringing the head to a controlled stop and distributing the force more evenly across the user's torso, technically speaking this is achieved by the brace's rigid structure acting as an alternate load path. So if you crashed and pushed your head backwards the brace would take the impact and transfers it to a wide area across the muscles on either side of your spine.

Karl Prestwood is the man who's responsible for importing the Leatt-Brace into the UK and as soon as they landed in the country KP invited DBR to test one. After all the talk of extension here and hyperflexion there I was left with a headful of story lines for Casualty so I wanted to get on with the fitment of the brace before I did any riding.

I have to admit I generally stay well clear of potentially restrictive body protection so I was apprehensive about trying the Leatt-Brace as I figured I would not be able to ride how I wanted to with it on. It's very important you get the fit just right before attempting any laps as to properly perform the brace should be fitted correctly. The manufacturers also reckon that the rider shouldn't really feel the brace if optimum fit it achieved.

I started with the brace set in the medium position and as soon as it was clipped into position on my shoulders and neck I had the feeling I was dreading. The brace felt restrictive and I knew straight away that I could not ride like that for 10 minutes, never mind 10 hours.

After explaining how I felt to Karl he went for an increase in the shoulder block size to a large. This felt perfect straight away and the brace suddenly felt lighter and less restrictive. With my helmet in place, the range of movement from back to front and side to side

was completely free — the design of the Leatt-Brace only comes into play at extreme ranges of movement.

With my Toomer warmed up and the Leatt-Brace properly fitted and clipped into position I went for a couple of laps out on the track. There's nothing to report on the riding side as within seconds I pretty much forgot the Leatt-Brace was on.

Safety and comfort are key to this product and the development time spent in design and manufacture is evident in the fit, comfort and level of protection allowing riders like you and me to buy one, get it fitted and go riding with an added level of safety and protection.

The feeling I got from wearing the brace was in no way negative as some riders may think if they wear one it shows a negative thought process. I think the opposite is true — if I'm on a fast trail or track in the future I may just snick it up another gear as I know my good friend the Leatt-Brace has me covered.

If you're worried about the way you look then the brace can be worn under your shirt so the bare minimum is on show, it can also be worn with most brands of body armour with little or no modification to the armour.

Having seen and tried the Leatt-Brace for myself I personally believe it is all it's cracked up to be and it's not just me who thinks so. American legend David Bailey posted a heart-felt, emotional endorsement for all to see online and with riders including Carmichael, Stewart, Windham, Despres, Coma and Sala all having tested the brace for themselves — Windham's even raced in one — you can see how seriously some people in the sport are taking this product.

There's no guarantee that this brace will stop paralysis or other major injury but you can rest assured that it's designed to take as much energy as possible from the impact and disperse it safely. If it stops just one rider from hurting themselves seriously it has to be worth all that development.

Thank you Dr Chris Leatt...

* For pricing and other information on the Leatt-Brace call Karl Prestwood on 07970 113383 or visit www.leatt-brace.com



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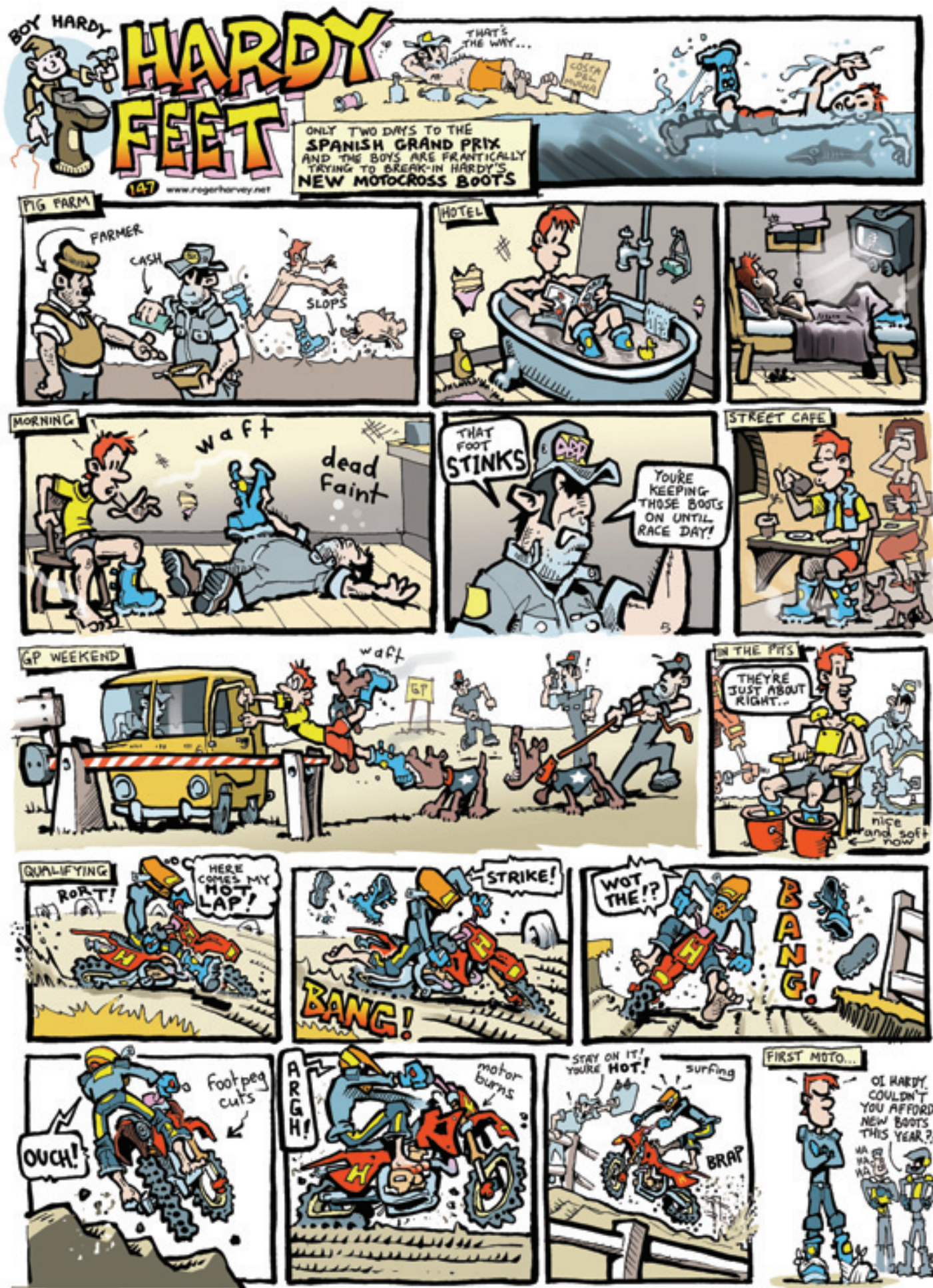
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FAST FOOD!

Get your diet right and you'll be ripping when you're racing but stuff it up and you'll be eating dirt...

Words by Alan Milway Photo by Suttty

FOR MANY of us this time of year is when the motivation to go out and train and prepare for racing starts to pick up.

One thing that's vitally important is eating the proper food – just like with our bikes, we've got to run our bodies on the right fuel. So it's time to start thinking of ourselves as athletes and understand what is relevant to our needs. If we are riding all day at the weekend, training during the week and wanting to fulfill our potential, our requirements are vastly different to someone who does no exercise and wants to shed three stone.

This month I'm going to break down what we need to eat and the best sources of these ingredients. The aim of this is to help you make informed decisions so you'll have an idea of the best things for you and how you can relate them to your riding, training and lifestyle.

What we eat plays a massive role in sports performance and will determine the duration at which we can ride or exercise, the intensity at which we can sustain this and how quickly we can recover from it.

The food we eat contains energy that is broken down and released by the body – the more physical effort in training and racing we put in, the more our nutritional needs increase. For motocross riders who are subject to high-intensity, medium-duration exercise, carbohydrate is the primary fuel required. However, those who regularly train will be able to utilise a higher proportion of fat as fuel when riding, preserving carbohydrate stores and allowing you to ride at a higher intensity for longer. This leads to lean physiques and the ability to train for long periods of time.

Things are similar for enduro riders but as carbohydrate stores are under threat of depletion during the event, in order to maintain a constant performance level carbohydrate must be taken in during the event. If not you will be forced to rely on fat to provide the energy requirements and this happens at a much slower rate. This situation is commonly known as 'hitting the wall' and is the feeling of all of a sudden having nothing left to give.

Studies have shown that taking on just 225ml of a five per cent glucose solution every 15 minutes during exercise is sufficient to prevent blood sugar levels from falling during prolonged exercise.

Great sources of food on the go during long

distance events include bananas, fig rolls, energy bars, energy drinks, sweets and jam sandwiches.

Another area to consider that will greatly affect your performance is hydration. During a 90-minute ride, a cyclist can lose 5-6 litres of water from their body. Studies have shown that an athlete's performance will suffer if they have an overall water loss, even if this is only one per cent of bodyweight. You must drink lots of water throughout the day!

Something else to be aware of is that thirst tells you that you are dehydrated. It is not a sign of impending dehydration so don't wait until you are thirsty before drinking. Having cold bottles of water waiting for you when you finish is important. Prepare for riding by supping on a bottle throughout the morning.

Although not thought of as helping hydration, salt may be added in small amounts to drinks to aid the uptake of water into the bloodstream. This is also a reason it is added to sports drinks in small amounts.

We are not all built like racehorses and some riders want to lose weight and so want to limit their food intake. My advice is to look at what you eat over a week-long period. Cut out sweet, fatty snack foods and increase exercise, even moderately, as it will lead to a steady weight loss.

Do not be tempted to suddenly cut down on carbohydrate intake. You may notice a sharp fall in weight initially but this is because you are using up your liver and muscle carbohydrate stores. Not good for any athlete or rider. The decrease in these and the associated water decrease (as carbohydrate is stored with water) causes the noticeable weight drop but as your stores replenish this weight will gradually return.

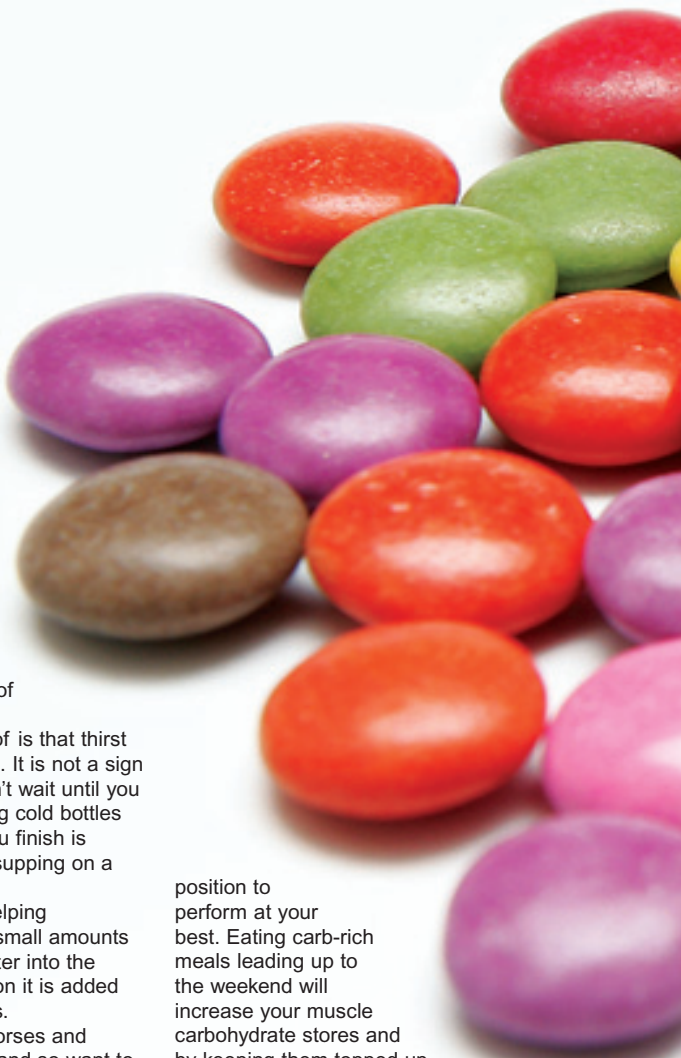
If energy intake through food is less than energy spent through exercise you will lose weight so the easiest way is to cut down slightly on food intake and increase exercise to keep weight under control. You will be surprised at how much difference cutting out those 11am chocolate biscuits will make.

The correct diet building up to and during a race weekend will put you in the best possible

position to perform at your best. Eating carb-rich meals leading up to the weekend will increase your muscle carbohydrate stores and by keeping them topped up over the weekend you'll go faster for longer.

What you mustn't do is eat a large meal in any proximity to a race. When at rest blood flow is concentrated to the guts and vital organs and this is great for digesting food. However, when you begin to exercise there is a big shift of blood flow to the working muscles and away from this central area. Having a conflict between the stomach and the muscles will affect your performance and is one reason cited for the dreaded 'stitch' (remember that glucose uptake is not affected by this mechanism so munching on a banana will not cause this).

If you are aware of what the body requires, what your current meals deliver and where – if any – there is a shortfall it's easy to correct and will make a huge difference to how you perform on the bike at the weekend. Being able to go for longer with less pain or fatigue and being able to recover quicker from a day on the bike is the best advert going for having a good diet!





FOOD FACTS!

Carbohydrate

Carbohydrate is a good fuel store and source of fuel. It is broken down at a high rate allowing exercise to be sustained at a relatively high intensity for a prolonged period.

It is the main form of energy we need and should form about 60-70 per cent of our daily food intake. Good sources include pasta, rice, beans, potatoes, bananas and bread.

Don't forget that sugar is a carbohydrate. For steady energy production and good health it is of much lower importance and intake should be reduced. Mars Bars, chocolate cookies and biscuits, cakes from the bakers etc have a relatively high sugar content but also a high saturated fat content.

If you are in desperate need of an energy hit after a long training session then a handful of jelly babies or similar will give you an instant pick me up.

Fat

Fat comes in two types – saturated and unsaturated. Saturated fat – think cream, butter, cream cheese and animal fat – increases cholesterol. Unsaturated fat is certainly the preferred source of fat and can be

found in nuts and oils.

Both of these sources of fat can be broken down by the body to produce useable sources of energy for us. Fat is actually a very efficient fuel store – it has high energy content, is stable when stored and is still readily mobilized to be broken down when required.

However, we need to cut down on the amount of saturated fat we take in as it can cause health problems. As a simple rule, saturated fat is solid at room temperature, unsaturated fat is liquid.

Protein

Protein is vital for diet but is not a source of energy and you do not break down protein to give you energy unless you are in a very bad way. So consuming protein supplements, bars or shakes to get you full of energy for a race is a misinformed way of preparing.

Protein is vital for muscle growth and development and after exercising or racing is very good for helping recovery. But we do not benefit from a 'more is better' theory of taking in protein as we only require a set amount – an amount that is easily fulfilled by a carnivorous diet and can be just as easily covered by a vegetarian diet too.

The requirements of the body for protein equate to about one gram of protein per kilo of bodyweight. So for a 70kg male, the body 'only' requires 70grams of protein per day. This is usually easily covered by a normal dietary intake of protein rich foods so there's no need to take in expensive supplements as your body will not use this excess.

Good natural sources of protein include chicken, beef, lamb, turkey, fish, nuts, beans and lentils.

Vitamins and minerals

As well as taking in macro nutrients such as carbohydrate, fat and protein we also need nutrition from other sources but in much smaller quantities.

Vitamins and minerals are vital for body function, good health and our overall health. A deficiency in these areas can lead to problems with our training – for example an iron deficiency can lead to lethargy and premature fatigue.

There are many, many sources of vitamins and minerals that I won't list here but – as the Government is keen to tell us – if you're not taking in at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day you need to address this.

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LYNG KINGS!

Who'll come out on top as the Maxxis British MX Championship stops off at Cadders Hill for round three?

APRIL 8 will see the Maxxis British Motocross Championship visit the county of Norfolk and, more specifically, the famous Cadders Hill circuit on the outskirts of the village of Lyng. The grass valley has been a regular stop on the domestic tour for as long as any of you may wish to remember and is a classic example of how a traditional scramble circuit can evolve to suit the modern era of the sport.

Norwich Vikings have been running meetings at the sand-based track for over 70 years, although it was through hosting the televised trophy scrambles back in the '60s that the circuit firmly established itself on the off-road map. Back in the days when the grand prix calendar was run on a totally separate class basis, the club hosted a round of the 125cc world championship in 1993 and is one of two tracks on the 2007 tour that can boast two-wheeled GP status.

The 1.82 km track opened the 2006 championship with Ken De Dycker and Josh Coppins each winning a moto apiece in the

MX1 category. Coppins took the overall victory by virtue of the best second race result as both him and De Dycker also recorded runners up places during their two outings. Given the CAS rider's form at the recent Hawkstone International – and the absence of Coppins from this year's series – De Dycker will return to Norfolk as the clear favourite. However, he just could come under pressure from a certain Billy MacKenzie with the young Scot having hopefully had time to adapt to the MX1 class and his factory Kawasaki.

Marc De Reuver dominated both MX2 races at Lyng in 2006 but it will be reigning British champion Carl Nunn who will be the man to beat this year. The now Bike It Yamaha-mounted East Anglian will be hoping for top honours at his home round, however the return of Mike Brown to our shores could just prove to be an unwelcome arrival for Mr Nunn. But while the transatlantic traveller may cause the upset of 2007, Tommy Searle surely remains the biggest threat to Carl's successful

defence of his crown.

The Cadders Hill track is situated one mile north of the A1067 Norwich to Fakenham road, or three miles from the A47 Norwich to King's Lynn road and is signposted from these major roads on the day of the event. As per last year, two entrances and exits will be used to assist with traffic flow in and out of the venue. If you are using a GPS navigation system the track is located at postcode NR9 5AL.

The action on the track kicks off at 9.30am with the sound of the small thumpers in the MX2 class breaking the morning silence as they go about their business of setting a qualifying time. The first support race kicks off at 12.30pm with the gate dropping on the first championship race at 1.05pm.

Full event info can be found at www.norwichvikings.co.uk where you can also buy discounted advance tickets. Prices on the gate will be £20 for adults, £10 for kids/OAPs while accompanied children under 14 years old will be admitted free of charge.



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THE REAL REED!

The last two seasons have taken their toll on Chad Reed – so much so that he felt forced to return to Australia to rediscover himself...

After winning a couple of supercross championships back home in Australia, Chad Reed ventured off at only 18 years of age to race the world MX championships in 2001 where he finished second to Mickael Pichon in his rookie – and only – GP season.

His vision was never set on GP domination, though. Reed was and is a supercross racer first and foremost and when the US series came calling in 2002 Chad was chomping at the bit. At the season-opening Anaheim Supercross, aboard a Yamaha of Troy YZ250, Reed won his semi and ran as high as second in the Main Event before a fall dropped him to sixth. He wasn't even slated to ride the 250cc class but he'd been riding 250s for years before so why not? He then went on to dominate the 125cc Eastern Regional SX series.

However, in the years since the fruition of his lifelong dream to win an AMA SX championship in 2004, Chad has struggled – both on and off the bike. So much so that he went to Australia last off-season in the hope that he would rediscover himself.

"So many things changed in my life," Reed says. "My personal life was in jeopardy, you know? At a point there I needed to get away. I needed to find who I was and who I

wanted to be. I felt that I had come so far so fast and it seemed like second and third place was the worst possible place for me to ever be. On one side, hey, I'm the second or the third-best guy in the world at supercross. There's only three of us and I'm among that three. But that felt so horrible. I felt like I was such a failure to myself and to my team and everyone. I let that pressure get to me."

And when it started affecting his friendships and his marriage to his wife Ellie he knew something had to change.

"I think the last two years were really hard years for me personally and I let it get going and going and going and I felt that I just got to the point where it affected me, Ellie and everybody around me," Reed says. "I just needed to get away and go and do what I used to do. I needed to go do what got me here. I went to Australia for seven weeks. I went there alone. I hung out with my mom, my dad and I went to the races and I was low-key. I really didn't do any media. I had one media thing that I had to do but other than that it was all for me. I went to the races and I didn't tell anyone I was going. I would just show up."

The time away from the scene helped Reed re-discover himself and re-focus his energy – not only in racing but in his personal life. Now, regardless of the result, Reed is able to keep a better perspective on his racing – and a much more positive outlook. He can focus on the task at hand.

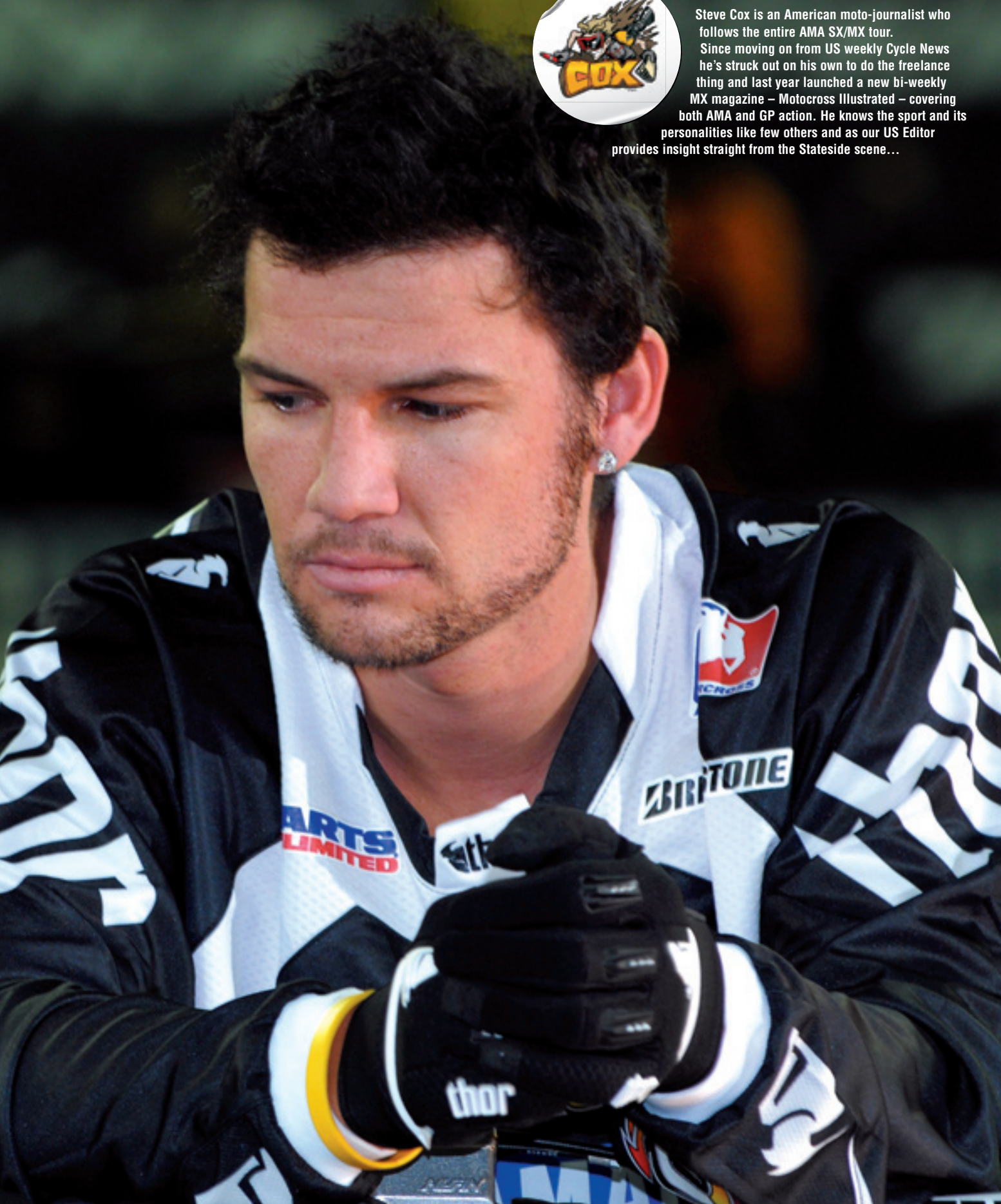
"There are things that you're working on day-to-day and week-to-week and they're not excuses, they're reasons," Reed says. "To the public and to the media I think they're excuses but to yourself they're reasons why things go one way or the other. I feel that this year I have a much more open mind and I understand the situation. I know it's a long season and I really, truly believe that I can win this title. I really feel that I can go out there and win races and get back up on top. I feel that can happen."

It's a fact that champions have characteristics that aren't



Steve Cox is an American moto-journalist who follows the entire AMA SX/MX tour.

Since moving on from US weekly Cycle News he's struck out on his own to do the freelance thing and last year launched a new bi-weekly MX magazine – Motocross Illustrated – covering both AMA and GP action. He knows the sport and its personalities like few others and as our US Editor provides insight straight from the Stateside scene...



CHAD REED

Chad celebrates victory in San Diego



FINAL LAP			
Rank	#	Name	Fast Lap Time
1	7	Stewart	1:48.347
2	20	Reed	1:51.834

always considered desirable off of the track – they can be selfish, they can be arrogant and they can be cocky.

"I think, for my situation – and I think for everyone else that's in my situation as well – that's extremely true," Reed says. "My whole life has been about me, whether it's been my family, whether it's been my relationship with my wife, whether it's been the team I'm on, I've always been the guy, you know? I think that your actions demand it. They require it. A huge reason why I'm here at L&M Racing is because of that reason. I felt that I needed more attention. That's not being selfish, that's going to the next level and trying to be the best that I can possibly be.

"My first year here, people thought of me as cocky. But that's not me at all. I felt that I was shy. But I was confident, yes. I had a goal. I had a vision and nothing was going to get in the way of that. I think that's what's different about us, we are those guys – whether it's Carmichael or Bubba or anyone at the top level, even actors – that just demand something extra. And believe me, there's the ups and there's the downsides to that.

"My own situation, my life revolves around me. Where I live at a certain part of the year is all about racing. Every decision in my life and my wife's life is very much based off of racing. That's hard to deal with for anyone and you've got to work through all that. So you've got the upside that you've got all these people that love you and that want to do nothing but help you but then you've got to go home to somebody that wants a little love too and you're so used to getting it and not used to giving it, it's tough."

Larry Brooks' L&M Racing team has been built around Chad and helping the Aussie to regain the AMA SX title.

"That's one good thing about the way this team is structured and the way the goals are set out – the number one goal is to win a supercross title and with all respect to [Nathan] Ramsey we know that there's one guy on the team that can do that," Reed says. "His position is to be the second guy and to do the best he possibly can and help out with whatever he can."

The team chemistry wouldn't work if Reed and Ramsey weren't such good friends or if it wasn't Ramsey as his team-mate but rather someone more like Reed.

"It's really hard to put two really good guys on a team," Reed says. "I think back in '99 when Team Honda had Windham, Pichon, Lusk and Tortelli, when you put a team together like that it's a recipe for disaster. I think maybe the one that's leading or winning is going to be the good guy but to be that fourth guy, that's a hard position to be in. Now we're all in a semi and everyone's doing the same thing.

"The one thing that I really look up to Ricky for is when he left Honda, everybody thought he was kind of crazy. At that point Suzuki was pretty much non-existent among the teams. But I respect him a lot because he built a race team around him. He went there knowing that he was going to be the number one guy. He went there knowing that everybody on that team wanted nothing but to win.

"I felt that was a good deal for him and he's built a race team that's now quite respected among the teams in the pits. He built that. He created that. In this day and age, the way the sport is, it's going to a whole new level and you need people on your team and behind you that believe in you and believe in your choices. Not everyone is right or wrong but you need somebody who believes in you and is willing to go in the direction you want to go."

It's no secret that Reed and Stewart don't get along. Ever since 2002 when the two were battling for the 125cc national championship things have been sour between them. That year, after hearing that Reed had said if he

could get a start with James he could beat him, Stewart let Reed pass him at Unadilla – then passed him back and went on to win the race.

"I think for sure I'm extremely motivated to beat James but that doesn't make my day tick," Reed says. "I don't think about James 24/7. I don't care. He's awesome. He really is awesome. You can't take that away from him. But I think he's very beatable. I think that I can do everything that he can, if not some things better. And the things that we're not better at, we'll work hard and I think that we can get there.

"The whole Unadilla thing flashes back in my mind a number of times. I think there's a lot of things that can happen and that situation will present itself again. Would I have done it? I don't know if I would do that. But he has his way of doing things and I have my way of doing things. We've got 16 races to show which way is going to win. Right now he's winning but I think we're getting strong and healthy again and it seems like it's going to be a fun season."

In Toronto, at the start of the world SX season in December, Reed showed that he was game for a battle when Stewart passed him only to have Reed pass him right back. Reed won the race.

"He's not used to me passing him back," Reed says. "I think whenever he races with Ricky, he races with Ricky. He knows where he stands with Ricky. I don't think he knows the real me. I really don't. He's never seen me ride to my potential I don't think and we're going to get there this year. We'll see. Toronto was a lot of fun. I was in that battle that I wanted to be in and San Fran was a lot of fun. It's a shame he crashed and a shame I crashed. It could've been a three-way battle all the way to the end.

"Everyone was a winner. We were winners because we gave it everything we got and whatever we finished was what we finished. The crowd loved it, Live Nation loved it – it was just looking like a runaway season and all of a sudden three guys are battling, two of the guys going for the title end up on their heads and a retired guy wins."

After the supercross season is over, for good or bad, Reed plans to do some V8 Supercar racing in Australia. His public image is growing there. He was recently listed as fourth on the list of highest-earning Aussie sports figures two years in a row and he's already thinking about the career he may head into after his motorcycle racing days are over.

"I think you need to have the passion for racing," Reed says. "It's not just something that you all of a sudden just say, 'hey, I'm going to go that direction'. I think it's something that you need to enjoy because it's a long series. It's something that I could commit to 10 years down the road from now. But for me it's just something that I have a passion for. Driving cars fast has always been fun and obviously the safety factor plays a huge role on the regular streets compared to on the racetrack. So, for me, growing up around racing, I would love to have the opportunity to get in a racecar and drive as fast as I could.

"I'm not good on a motorcycle because I got one at three-and-a-half – I think you're born with the skill," Reed says. "For me, I have motor skills. I love racing. It doesn't matter if it's motorcycles or what – my first passion is obviously this but there's going to come a day that this is going to run out and I'm going to have to go step into something else. I love my life being involved around racing so I'm all for it."

But, for now, Reed is turning over a new leaf as he hopes more people get to know the real Chad Reed – not the one that has been hanging around and signing autographs in his place the last couple of years.



Chad has locked horns on many occasions with his nemesis James Stewart



"I don't think a lot of people know me and I'll take the heat for that," Reed says. "I feel that a lot of the things that I did this year were to get away from the image that was created around me. There were certain people who I think created that around me and I'm away from that, I feel. I feel that I've created a new team of people around me and we're ready to change that. I'm a fun guy. I'm a guy that loves life to the fullest. I think that's probably the number one reason I don't want to do the Nationals. I want to be around and I want to be doing fun things. Whether it's putting on a road-race suit and going and having fun riding a MotoGP bike if I have that opportunity or supermoto or car racing – NASCAR or whatever. I want that opportunity. I want to hang out with my wife, go on vacation with her and not feel bad about it."

So Chad hopes that focusing exclusively on SX will not only allow him more free time but focus him more on the task at hand – winning the AMA supercross title.

"I feel that supercross is my thing. I want to give it everything I've got," Reed says. "I devote all of my time from September all the way through to May. That is a long season you're asking from somebody. We give up a lot. After May I'm about me and my wife and doing fun things that we want to do. That's it. I think that a lot of people are going to be pretty pissed off with that but at the end of the day you've got to make yourself happy and that's what makes me happy."

"I'm going to put back into the sport. I'm going to create some cool and interesting things in Australia. You may not see me here in the US racing the Nationals but as far as global things with the sport, I think I'm putting back more than most."



DOUBLE DROP!

You know someone's good when you're forced to count their losses rather than their wins – and Stewart's just lost two out of the last three...

In years past James Stewart has lost races through sheer impatience. In fact, he's developed the reputation that if he starts a ways behind he will try and make up a lot of time in a short time – and often this has resulted in a DNF or even injury.

However, Stewart has an opportunity to show his maturity at the Houston round of the AMP'D Mobile/AMA SX series as he starts out behind his championship rivals and then sits behind them and bides his time until the opportunity to take the lead arises.

Stewart's team-mate Timmy Ferry grabs his first holeshot in five years to start the Main Event with Kevin Windham second, Chad Reed third, Windham's team-mate Travis Preston fourth and Stewart fifth.

Windham shows a spark of life as he passes Ferry right at the end of lap one, taking over the lead and immediately distancing himself a bit from the pack. Preston falls while fourth on the second lap, crashing right in front of Stewart which momentarily halts his charge. Preston remounts eighth.

"I had a couple guys go down in front of me –

Preston went down right after the whoops and I lost a little time," Stewart says. "I saw Kevin riding good out front, then I saw Timmy and I saw Chad and he really wasn't making it too hard. He was sitting in third. He didn't really close on those guys like I thought he would."

Stewart finally makes his move on Reed for third on lap four and then makes quick work of Ferry a lap later. A lap after that, he shoves by Windham and into the lead.

"I knew I had to take my time," Stewart says. "I know my conditioning would bring me up to the front when lap 20 comes around so I wasn't really rushing it... I just wasn't in a rush and once I caught up to Chad I just put those few laps down and got around him and then Kevin and rode a solid race after that."

The series heads to San Diego next where Reed chased down Carmichael for the win in 2005. Here Carmichael's team-mate Ivan Tedesco grabs the holeshot followed by Reed, Stewart, Windham and Ferry. Reed passes Tedesco on the opening lap for the lead and Stewart follows suit a lap later, as does Windham a lap after that.

Stewart immediately sets out after Reed and after hounding him for two laps makes the pass stick on lap four before immediately putting a small gap on Reed. "At that point he had kind of pulled a little bit of a gap and I was trying to keep that gap as minimal as possible and get back up there," Reed says.

As he crosses the finish line to complete lap eight Stewart flies off his bike and crashes in a heap into the face of the second jump of the finish line double after swinging wide in the corner before and hanging up his rear brake lever on Tuff Blox which sends him over the bars. It takes him a while to get going.

Reed assumes the lead over Windham who then loses second to Ferry. Stewart remounts eighth, just behind David Vuillemin. Once Ferry grabs second the podium is set. Reed takes the victory over Ferry and Windham while Tedesco holds on for fourth in front of Stewart.

"I feel good," Reed says. "Relieved more than anything. I think St Louis [in 2006] was probably the most emotional I felt. Tonight, I just feel relieved. I knew I could win. We've been working hard and

Speedy Reedy chases after James Stewart in San Diego – a Bubba crash hands the win to the Aussie





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Kevin Windham's fourth in the title chase

it's this team that got me here."

Racing against Carmichael seems to bring out the best in Stewart and after San Diego he needs all the inspiration he can get in Atlanta. Reed grabs the Main Event holeshot, squeezing both Stewart and Carmichael out in the corner. Stewart grabs second right off and Carmichael grabs third.

Before the trio cross the line to complete the first lap, Stewart stuffs Reed in a turn leading onto the start straightaway and takes the lead. Reed has an opportunity to retaliate but thinks better of it. Barely over a lap later, Reed falls in a rutted turn following the finish line jump, handing Carmichael second and remounting fifth.

From there Carmichael makes a push to try and catch the fleeting Stewart. "I got a good start," Carmichael says. "I wasn't where I wanted to be but it was us three again and I was behind both Reed and James. I seen James pass Chad and I could see him putting in a sprint so I was like, 'sh't, I need to get by Chad'. Then Chad made a mistake and I got by him when that happened and I tried reeling in James but he was nailing that rhythm section and I had my skirt on through that rhythm section. I was scared to do it and he wasn't."

The rhythm section Carmichael is speaking of is just after the finish line. Out of a left-hand corner (the first turn of the race) there are two small jumps, then a tabletop with a lip on the end of it. Most riders are jumping onto the table, then jumping off over the next jump, tripling and doubling out. Stewart clears the entire tabletop and then triple-triples out.

"It was real gnarly," Stewart says. "Everybody keeps telling me. I was able to pull out some lines that I wasn't doing all day long and I felt like I had a good rhythm going. It was faster and I was able to put it together in the

Main Event real consistent. I think I started jumping it like four laps in because I knew I had to get a little gap because I knew the way the lappers were and the way the track was it was kind of one-lined."

In St Louis Reed grabs the holeshot followed closely by Stewart while Carmichael sits about fifth. Just before the finish of the first lap Stewart passes Reed for the lead, only for Reed to force the issue back to the inside of Stewart and knock them both down. Reed remounts quickly just behind Carmichael but Stewart remounts 19th. Carmichael, seeing his chance, puts on a sprint. "I saw Reed back there and put it down," Carmichael says.

Over the next couple of laps Carmichael gets into the lead and begins to pull away while Reed works his way into second around his team-mate Nathan Ramsey. However, by just past the halfway point Stewart amazingly catches Reed for second. He makes the pass in the same corner where Reed knocked them both down but Stewart is much nicer about it, just holding Reed up high before taking off with second place. By then, though, Carmichael is too far gone even for Stewart.

So Carmichael takes his second victory of the AMA season with only two more supercross races on his schedule. "My goal was to win two of these four [in a row that he's racing]," Carmichael says. "Now I just need one of the next two."

After the race Stewart motions for Reed to come up and talk to him and the two get into an argument that concludes with Reed pushing Stewart in his back as Stewart rides off. "I can't really say what was said," Stewart says.

There's no love lost between those two and there are still seven more races to run before a champion is crowned. Watch this space...



With seven rounds still to go Stewart's 19 points clear

SERIES STANDINGS Supercross

1	James Stewart	210 points
2	Chad Reed	191
3	Tim Ferry	149
4	Kevin Windham	137
5	Ricky Carmichael	116
6	Michael Byrne	114
7	Heath Voss	107
8	Ivan Tedesco	103
9	David Vuillemin	101
10	Travis Preston	97



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Lawrence and Villopoto lock horns in Houston



Josh Grant holds down sixth in the Lites West



BT kicks arse in the East

PRO SHOW! Ryan wins out west

Pro-Circuit Kawasaki's Ryan Villopoto may be the earliest SX champion ever crowned as his pure dominance of the Lites Western Regional SX Championship sees him win six of the seven races run before the series heads east, resulting in him clinching the championship at the seventh round of the series in February.

Outdoors he'll be defending his 2006 title against – among others – his now healthy team-mate Ben Townley. And speaking of Townley, the former world champion has the supercross season start he hoped for last year as he gets into the season healthy and starts up front in the first Lites Main of the Eastern series in Atlanta.

He's gaining on the leader, Makita Suzuki's Ryan Dungey, when his bike breaks before the halfway point of the Main. Dungey goes on to win while Townley scores no points.

At round two, though, Townley grabs the holeshot and fights off attacks from team-mate Darcy Lange and Dungey on his way to winning his first ever supercross Main Event in only his second try.

"This is a dream for me," Townley says. "Since I was a kid, I've always wanted to race and win in supercross and now here I am. It's the greatest feeling."

Dungey stalls his bike part way through the Main and finishes 17th, leaving him in a dogfight for the championship while consistent Yamaha of Troy team-mates Ryan Morais and Matt Goerke are tied atop the leaderboard.

SERIES STANDINGS

Lites East

1	Ryan Morais	40 points
2	Matt Goerke	40
3	Darcy Lange	37
4	Ryan Dungey	28
5	Justin Brayton	26
6	Zach Osborne	26
7	Ben Townley	25
8	Ryan Sipes	25
9	Jeff Alessi	22
10	Mike Alessi	18

Lites West

1	Ryan Villopoto	172 points
2	Jason Lawrence	135
3	Josh Hill	108
4	Jake Weimer	102
5	Chris Gosselaar	95
6	Josh Grant	90
7	Josh Hansen	87
8	Matt Lemoine	85
9	Troy Adams	70
10	Kyle Cunningham	65



Villopoto sews up the Lites West title



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PSYCHED!

After a successful stay Stateside over the winter world MX2 champ Christophe Pourcel is back in Europe, feeling super-confident and aiming to defend his title in the best possible way – by winning races!

Words and photos by Alex Hodgkinson





**Christophe's form in West Coast SXs
- including the win in Phoenix -
was a revelation**



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Leading Tony Cairoli



A cracked tibia cut his AMA SX campaign short



WORLD MX2 champion Christophe Pourcel's back to defend his crown this year and after a short but successful stay Stateside over the winter the French teenager is fully prepped to make two major changes to his '06 profile – to win more GPs and to speak more English!

The 18-year-old won the world title but not unqualified praise for his bike skills with just two GP victories to his name last season and his stubborn refusal to speak anything but his native French alienated him from much of the world MX media.

Throughout 2006, as we struggled through interviews, it was clear that Chris understood at least as much English as I did French but at Valencia last month he chatted for half-an-hour without even a hint of lapsing into his native tongue.

"I have more confidence speaking English now. The problem before was that I didn't want to speak the language at all because I knew I would make mistakes. Now I believe in myself more and I don't feel so self-conscious about making small mistakes."

The breakthrough came during the winter. "When I was in America with Mitch and Pro-Circuit I had to speak English with everybody all the time and it all seemed so easy all of a sudden. I still need to learn more words but people understand me and that is what is important."

Still on crutches after fracturing his right tibia at Anaheim II, Chris was also clear about his approach to racing in 2007. "You will see a different me this year. Last year I controlled the series with constant results all summer but this year I want to win a lot of races. You can even win a GP with a 3-3 day but I want to win with 1-1 this year so that everybody remembers me as the best."

Big-headed? No, just a champion who knows how good he is and, being French, is not ashamed of it!

The winter just gone was always going to be a hectic round of globetrotting for one of the hottest properties in world motocross with PR and promotion, testing in Japan and the first acclimatisation visit to the States. And even technically supreme motocrossers get hurt.

His first Bercy title under his belt, Chris had one more race before heading for America. "Unfortunately, I broke my left thumb at the end of November at the Genova Supercross and couldn't ride again until December 20 so I was just there for just over a month."



Leading AMA team-mates Villopoto and Townley at the MX des Nations

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Before heading Stateside
Pourcel won at Bercy



SX SCORES

Anaheim I (second)

"I really didn't expect such a good result straight off. In training I was on the same times as Villopoto which gave me confidence to finish on the podium but before that I would have been happy with top six. I didn't want to put my expectations too high in advance, I took the approach that I was there to learn and let's see what happens first."

Phoenix (winner)

"After Anaheim I just wanted to have another good race at Phoenix. I was riding for me and I wanted to have pleasure in my riding but I felt good on the bike all week and it all came so easy. I wasn't tired at the end of the race. I was good on the bike, I was flowing and I was happy for me and the team when I won."

"It's not until you finish the race and look up, you suddenly realise just how many people are there watching you in the stadium. When you are racing, you are completely unaware of them. You are simply focused on yourself, your bike, your rivals and the track. Well, I am that way anyway, fortunately."

"I got the lead quickly at Phoenix and I had a good lead by the time Villopoto came to second but

he didn't catch me at all. I never ride 100 per cent. Sometimes when you are second or third, you try to push to catch the guy in front and end up making mistakes but when I am in front like there in Phoenix I am just cruising 80-90 per cent. I was riding my race and from the second lap I knew that that was my race. I know that if I ride my race, then nobody is going to catch me."

Anaheim II (DNF)

"I broke the middle finger on my right hand during the week and I needed injections for the pain at the race. I worked all weekend with Asterisk Medical and the heat went well. I won that but then on the fourth lap of the Main Event I fractured my tibia. I jumped a bit too far on a little double. It was a compression break."

"Normally I should have been in plaster but I didn't want that. The tibia was not broken and there was no ligament damage but there was a crack in the lower part of the bone and Doctor Dufour, an osteopath who has treated many French sportsmen, agreed that I could use just a support bandage. I should be able to ride again by March 1 and I have been able to continue with my training for the upper body so I should have no problems at the first GP."

But those five weeks – with three AMA supercrosses and daily trips to the Kawasaki test track – were enough to let both Chris and America see what they will experience full-time from 2008 as he started his AMA Pro race career with a progressive 2-1 and outpaced US champ Ryan Villopoto every single day at the test track.

"I was very impressed with the Pro-Circuit team set-up. They are very serious about their job. Mitch (Payton) himself is not there at the test track every day, just one or two times before the race when I tried the race bike."

"And it is an open atmosphere in the team. I was not just with my technicians, I also spoke about the bike and settings with the other riders on the team. We discussed how the bike was working, even about lines. I was surprised because I had expected that the American riders would not want to share their experiences with me but it wasn't like that. That was cool."

Chris also gave some insight into one of the reasons why Pro-Circuit have been so dominant for so many years. "The Pro-Circuit bike is so different, so much top-end power. You just keep twisting the throttle and you never reach peak revs, there is no limit. I like this but I had to get used to the throttle response, it was so rapid and I was pulling a wheelie out of the start and the turns every time at first. If there is one thing I need to work on for next year, it is that."

"But there is no question of using that bike in the GPs. We have different engineers here in the GPKR team and we also have a very good set-up, different but good. The Pro-Circuit team know their job and the GPKR team know theirs and I don't think there would be any advantage in trying to mix them up."

"Also, if we tried to use Pro-Circuit ideas on the GP bike we would need too many engines. At Pro-Circuit, you change the engine nearly every time you ride. In the GP we change the engine two, sometimes three times in a weekend. In America we already change the engine twice in practice and for the race you have another new engine. For practice we have a really good bike but for the race we have a really, really, really good bike."

"Generally we then use the same engine for the heat and the Main but if there is the slightest doubt that there could be a problem, if you say that you feel you have heard something, you get another new engine for the Main."

At Bercy, where BT's sidekick Craig Behl had strict instructions not to let the locals touch the motor, they changed the engine once – on the final day. By Pro-Circuit standards the





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Christophe celebrates
his MX2 title at Ernee



Bercy winner was a training bike!

It was not all work however as Chris started to get acquainted with his future world. "I met up with my French friends like Eric Sorby, went and looked round the stores and we had a few parties. In many ways it was not so different to here. My agent Russell Stratten lives in Hollywood and arranged everything for me before I even arrived, at the team and away. I have my own house pretty close to the training track and in some ways it was no different to being in Europe.

"But it was warm in California so I was happy about that. It meant I could work hard with my team every day on the suspension to get it perfect for me. I had an American mechanic with me this winter but next year I expect to take my mechanic from France. And



It'll all end in tears...

everything is set up so that when I go there in October it will be there waiting for me."

So will we notice a different style as Chris pushes for more victories this summer? Remember last year's GP finale? "I crashed at Ernee when the bike jumped out of gear so it wasn't my fault. That was really frustrating. I really wanted it that day. I hadn't won so many races all year but there were so many fans there and I felt so cool on the bike."

And with big brother Sebastien now in MX1 and unable to offer feedback we could see one other change. "Maybe I will make the sighting lap more often this year. For sure I don't do it if it is raining but more often than last year. But there will also be times when I am preparing my start when the others are on the sighting lap. Just wait and see."

And at the end of it all? "I expect nothing less than another title. I will win – I am confident of that – and I don't feel any pressure. I think I only have to look to Antonio and Tyla, nobody else over the series. Perhaps some other rider can be there for one race but not for the season."

When you can clinch a world title at 18 and win your second ever AMA SX you've earned the right to be that confident!





BATTLE STATIONS!

Everts' retirement leaves it wide open in MX1 while MX2 should see either a French, Italian or South African champion by the end of the season

Words and photos by Alex Hodgkinson

So who's going to replace Everts as the king of MX1? Kevin Strijbos #2 and Billy MacKenzie #211 will be hoping to be in the mix



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...but the Kiwi's got to get to grips with a new bike and team in '07



Tanel Leok needs to stay on two wheels



KTM's MX1 hopes lie with Barragan and Philippaerts

THE KING is gone! Hail the new King! But who will it be? Okay, so Stefan will still be around, marshalling the Orange Army – but the Everts era came to an end at the Nations last year and the MX1 world series is wide open as motocross will crown a new champion in 2007.

In the warm-up races none of the favoured candidates have been too keen to lay their claim too early and next month's Valkenswaard winner will still be 28 races away from eternal glory. But nobody will want to be out of the frame in Holland and most of the rabbits will have been put in their place when the action switches from 20-minute warm-up dashes to two full-blooded 40-minute motos around the most demanding circuits in the world.

Having clinched the world's premier four-stroke series for the last six years, Yamaha are favourites #1. The Rinaldi brothers were positive from the get-go in their search for a replacement for Everts when they tied up the deal with Josh Coppins by mid-summer. And when the 30-year-old Kiwi dealt out Stefan's only defeat of the year at the Desertmartin GP their judgement was confirmed.

Any slender doubts which anyone might have had about the ability of the two-time British champ to adapt to a Yamaha after years on Suzuki and Honda have been banished at a stroke as Josh has gone 2-1-1 through the first three warm-up races without breaking sweat.

Team Rinaldi put the Everts bike in the museum and have built a made-to-measure bike from scratch for their new man and the decisive way in which Josh stamped his authority on the third moto at Valence – when the victory was on the line for any one of four – indicated that he too is up to the job. Anyone who wants the title has to beat Coppins!

Contenders #1 are in the yellow corner. Kevin Strijbos is theoretically the heir apparent and with six years GP experience at the age of

21 he's got a lot going for him. He even put in a hammer pass on Coppins on the last lap of the second moto at Valence but has otherwise not been particularly impressive. But, although the return of Corona as title sponsor was unveiled at Mantova, the new GP bikes were not fired up until Hawkstone.

Steve Ramon was a greater threat than his Suzuki team-mate in high summer last year and has already won the Belgian opener at Grobbendonk. But the 27-year-old has lapsed back into his immaculate but at times indecisive style so far this year and was actually passed by Marvin Van Daele in the opening heat on home turf. For sure he will be close – but on top?

Kawasaki have not had a world title in the premier class since Tortelli in 1998 and they go with youth as they seek to correct this deficiency among the diplomas on the boardroom wall. Tanel Leok started last season as the closest rival to Everts but a shoulder injury plagued him all summer as he slipped down the table until he finally mounted the podium again at the series finale. The 20-year-old Estonian showed good speed – albeit a lap down – in the Valence finale but must avoid crashes if he's to challenge.

Billy MacKenzie is Britain's newest factory rider, indeed the soon-to-be 23-year-old Scot is the only Brit who can claim this honour in MX1 but the DBR columnist has to master a switch of marque and class to succeed this summer. Billy will want podiums – even a moto – but like all of the new boys will probably need a season to truly appreciate the respect which a 450 demands at this level.

The final factory with title ambitions are KTM. Jonathan Barragan, the shock man of 2006 who kept Everts racing to the flag in Portugal and Sweden, has not started well and picked up an ankle injury at Valence. ►



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Marc De Reuver is another to change bikes, teams and classes for '07



Gordon Crockard (left) will want podium finishes

Max Nagl is an exciting prospect in MX1



Hopefully the 21-year-old from Madrid will not be one of those who fail to live up to high expectations in their second year.

His new sidekick is the effervescent David Philippaerts. The tall Italian who combines artisan grit with an at times uncanny floating relationship to his bike has already won motos at Mantova and Valence. Now 23, David knows he cannot ride a 450 like he did his 250F if he wants to stay alive but old habits are difficult to change and, even if he stays on, the effects of 'wasting' energy for our entertainment were already apparent at the end of the day in MX2.

The final Japanese factory rider is Coppins' sidekick Marc De Reuver but the 24-year-old

Dutchman has struggled to date this year. There's no doubting that 'Calimero' is capable of an amazing turn of speed but it sometimes comes at the expense of control!

Three Italian factories complete the works entries but even a podium seems out of reach. At 34 Chicco Chiodi is in the twilight of his career and Cedric Melotte, his team-mate on Aprilia's whispering twin, probably has the best chance of a result some time in the year.

Manuel Priem replaces Antti Pyrhonen at TM and the 25-year-old, whose nickname 'Diesel' says everything, will still be hammering away after two times 40 week-in, week-out. But this admirable trait will not win GPs, even when

the Pesaro factory unveil their alu-framed CR copy in mid-summer.

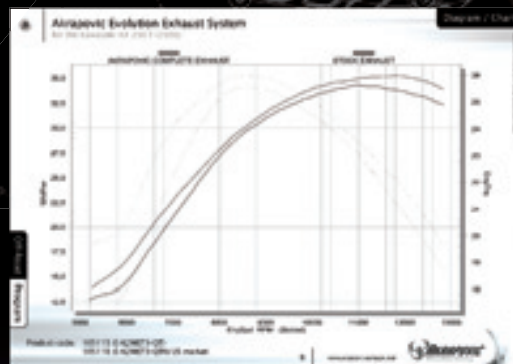
WRM are welcome newcomers to the series with their 'concept bike' but the days when an Italian garage band could challenge for honours is gone and Cristian Beggi is no Joel Smets.

Yes, I haven't mentioned Honda yet but the red giant does not support a factory team – their hopes rest with CAS. Mike Brown has never starred on big bikes, the 34-year-old's titles on both sides of the Atlantic coming on 125s, so Honda hopes rest securely on the shoulders of current British champion Ken De Dycker.

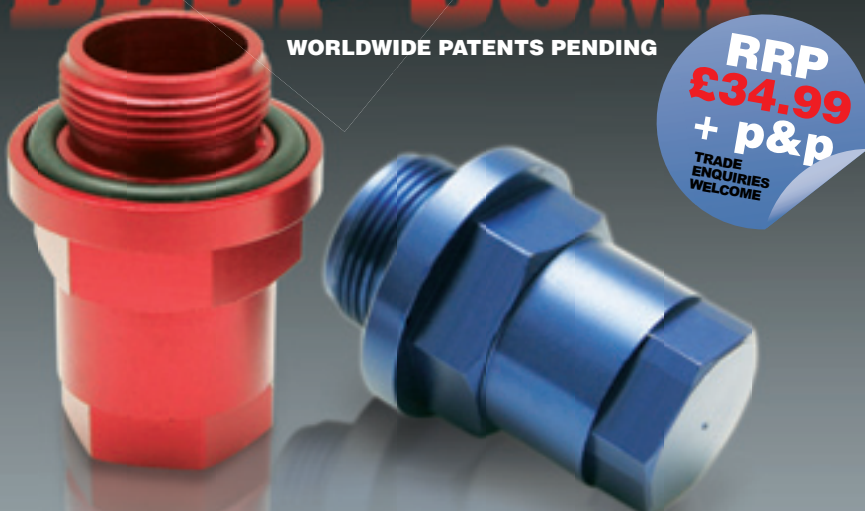
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MX2 king Christophe Pourcel is supremely confident

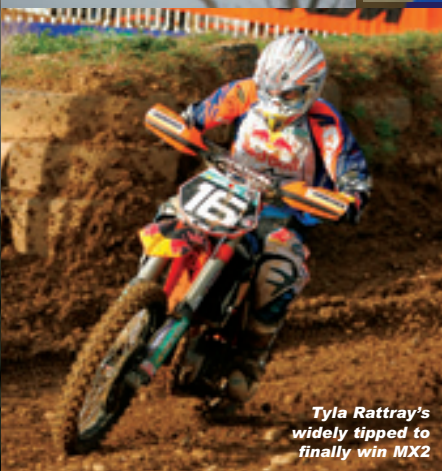


Tony Cairoli wants his MX2 title back



gp preview

Jokers wild - De Reuver and Cairoli!



Tyla Ratray's widely tipped to finally win MX2



Can Tommy Searle join the MX2 'big three'?

and can be without doubt the fastest man on the track. But Neil Prince will have had to move mountains to get Keeno fit enough over the winter for him to race from gate to flag like that. If he could find the tempo he can hold for 40 minutes Ken could maybe rip them apart just as sensationally as Joel Robert did in 1964.

As we so often do, Britain provides the remaining potential top-tenners on Honda with James Noble seeking new motivation at Multitek and Gordon Crockard the confirmation of his revival with Paul Rowlands' PAR Homes squad. Both should be top 10 but the 26-year-old from Whitby needs more zest in his riding to hit the ultimate headlines and the Crock Star knows at 28 that his best chances were back in the early years of the millennium when we still raced motocross rather than mound-infested slot car tracks.

Neville Bradshaw is another who will score points but can't win, injury means that Mark Jones will miss the start of the campaign for Wulfsport Kawasaki and happy-go-lucky Hungarian Kornel Nemeth is a big-hearted trier – which leaves us with the rabbit who could outfox them all.

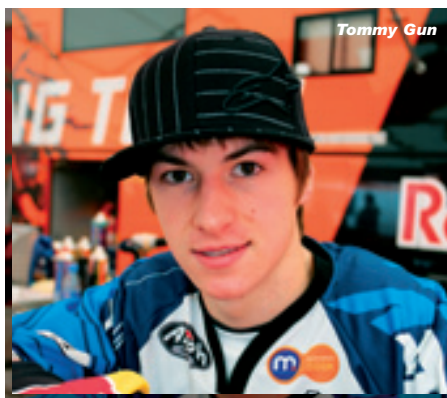
Max Nagl has been called a sensation this spring but the only surprise is that the 19-year-old Bavarian has not previously had the opportunity to show his talents. The Mantova winner was a wasted talent in MX2 where horsepower and brain fade are two of the more important ingredients. With a surplus of power, Max can run near the front all year. Not enough to be champ but more than enough to leave his calling card for 2008.

It's a strange year in MX2. The only one of last year's top four to have quit the class is Philippaerts but the remaining three all have three things in common – the first is that they each believe '07 is their year, the second is that the other two will be their main threat and the third is that they each want to head Stateside in the autumn.

Chris Pourcel is coming into the season off a cracked tibia but his confidence is sky high and he will have had a month back on the bike by Valkenswaard. Last year he won with tactical rides to outscore his closest chaser each week

but this year – his last in Europe – he wants to go out with wins. Either he will slay them or it will backfire and he will be the one on the ground. Somehow I feel it could be the former.

Tony Cairoli has already found out it is harder to defend a title than to win it but the De Carli Yamaha is now even faster if we are take to Mantova as a guide and Tony indicated at the end of last year that he is learning to stay on more often.



Tommy Gun

Tyla Ratray has now lost two titles he thought were his for the taking. He will probably win Valkenswaard and he will win some more but has he learnt from the mistakes which put him out of the title reckoning midway through each of the past two seasons?

KTM's misplaced confidence in their own infallibility also played a role and this is possibly the factor which will determine whether or not Tommy Searle can continue his sensational surge up the rankings to join the Big Three. Early rides suggest that Tommy Gun is not yet as comfortable on orange as he was on green. Let's wait and see.

There are those who believe US imports Ryan Mills – in Italy with Martin Honda – and Sean Hamblin – in the UK to lead the new Swift Suzuki set-up – can stir things up but if they can't beat Villopoto can they really stand a chance against Chris P and Tony C?

Other names mentioned have been Kenneth Gundersen – whose top class comeback in '06

was on the back of two years off the bike – and Rui Goncalves. But the Norwegian has been shocking in the early races and the Portuguese has suffered first a broken leg and then a fractured collarbone during the winter. Manuel Monni impressed at times at Mantova but can he hold it together for a full race duration?

Carl Nunn re-emerged as a world force in the last two years with Champ but still the final ingredient was missing to make the British champ a regular winner on foreign soil. But the 27-year-old's only GP win came in Y2K with Dixon Yamaha. An omen?

Kawasaki's main hopes in the class rest clearly with the defending champion but, despite the loss of Searle, Molson will also want to have a word to say with Gareth Swanepoel. Until he smacked his shoulder again to surrender a certain top 10 ranking the 22-year-old Springbok had pulled himself up from an injury-plagued start to start pushing seriously for the honour of series top 'Brit'. With a clean start to 2007 the sky's the limit.

There are new kids on the block every year but, to be brutally frank, none of the new crop of continentals stand out as did Cairoli, then Pourcel and last summer Searle. I don't even expect much from Euro champ Dennis Verbruggen – the Belgian will be 20 in August and even mentor John Van den Berk is concerned he can too easily be overawed.

The young Brits look to be in good shape and an extended run of qualification could be the springboard for Shaun Simpson, Elliott Banks-Browne, Jake Nicholls and, when he gets his chance later in the year, Ashley Greedy.

Although no longer in the first flush of youth at 25, TC impressed me with his final moto speed at Valence but needs his first-ever injury-free year, Jason Dougan could star given the chance if he could find the resolve and I can believe that Carlos Campano has the talent to be the surprise of the year if he settles down with Steve Dixon. He is potentially as good as Barragan.

And then there is the return of the prodigal son. It is not yet clear when Swordy can even start again and '07 is definitely at most a rebuild year.

GUNNING FOR GLORY, MX2 2007 >>

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2007 teams

MX1 Factory

Geboers Suzuki (B): #2 Kevin Strijbos (B),
#11 Steve Ramon (B)
De Groot Kawasaki (NL): #5 Tanel Leok (EW),
#211 Billy MacKenzie (GB)
Rinaldi Yamaha (I): #6 Josh Coppins (NZ),
#14 Marc De Reuver (NL)
Red Bull KTM (A): #7 Jonathan Barragan (E),
#19 David Philippaerts (I)
TM (I): #8 Manuel Priem (B)
Aprilia (I): #10 Cedric Melotte (B), #121 Chicco Chiodi (I)
WRM (I): #15 Cristian Beggi (I), #35 Cristian Stevanini (I)

MX1 Private

CAS Honda (GB): #3 Mike Brown (US),
#9 Ken De Dycker (B)
PAR Honda (GB): #13 Gordon Crockard (GB),
#74 Neville Bradshaw (SA)
Multitek Honda (GB): #16 James Noble (GB)
NGS Honda (F): #24 Pierre-Alexandre Renet (F)
Martin Honda (I): #28 Antoine Meo (F)
HDI Honda (F): #32 Julien Vanni (F), Cyrille Coulon (F)
LS Honda (B): #21 Danny Theybers (B)
Shineray Honda (B): #95 Marvin Van Daele (B)
RForce 8 Honda (CH): #115 Marc Ristori (CH)
Delta Kawasaki (CZ): #12 Javier Garcia Vico (E),
#29 Julien Bill (CH)
CLS Kawasaki (F): #18 Thomas Allier (F)
Wulfspor Kawasaki (GB): #34 Mark Jones (GB)
Medei Kawasaki (I): #51 Matteo Dottori (I),
#71 Antti Pyrhonen (SF)
GPKR Kawasaki (B): #90 Sebastien Pourcel (F)
3C Yamaha (I): #23 Alex Salvini (I)
Van Beers Yamaha (NL): #111 Aigar Leok (EW)
Teka Suzuki (D): #38 Dimitri Parshin (Rus),
#108 Kornel Nemeth (H)
MTM Suzuki (B): #76 Marcus Norlen (S),
#77 Bas Verhoeven (NL)
Sarholz KTM (D): #101 Max Nagl (D)
Errevi KTM (I): #39 Daniele Bricca (I)



Shaun Simpson
will be looking
to establish
himself in MX2

MX2 Factory

Red Bull KTM (A): #16 Tyla Rattray (SA),
#101 Tommy Searle (GB)

MX2 Private

GPKR Kawasaki (B): #377 Chris Pourcel (F),
#20 Greg Aranda (F)
Molson Kawasaki (GB): #4 Stephen Sword (GB),
#14 Gareth Swanepoel (SA), #24 Tom Church (GB)
CLS Kawasaki (F): #21 Steven Frossard (F),
#22 Anthony Boissiere (F)
Wulfspor Kawasaki (GB): #34 Shaun Simpson (GB)
Martin Honda (I): #7 Ryan Mills (US)
SRS Honda (I): #17 Matti Seistola (SF),
#18 Pier Filippo Bertuzzo (I)
LS Honda (B): #30 Dennis Dierckx (B)
NGS Honda (F): #47 Pascal Leuret (F)
PAR Honda (GB): #75 Ashley Greedy (GB)
Eurotank Honda (SK): #116 Martin Kohut (SK)
De Carli Yamaha (I): #222 Tony Cairoli (I),
#36 Matteo Bonini (I), #501 Alessandro Lupino (I)
Dixon/Bike It Yamaha (GB): #8 Carl Nunn (GB),

#15 Carlos Campano (E), #50 Martin Barr (GB)
Van Beers Yamaha (NL):
Dennis Verbruggen (B)
Ricci Yamaha (I): #12 Kenneth Gundersen (N),
#39 Davide Guarneri (I), #131 Nicolas Aubin (F)
3C Yamaha (I): #19 Manuel Monni (I)
PSM Yamaha (F): #121 Xavier Boog (F)
Silver Action KTM (I): #10 Rui Goncalves (P),
#44 Angelo Pellegrini (I)
Sarholz KTM (D): #25 Wyatt Avis (SA),
#27 Markus Schiffer (D)
Errevi KTM (I): #28 Roberto Lombrici (I)
Vangani KTM (B): #66 Aigars Bobkovs (LV),
#77 Shannon Terreblanche (SA)
Champ KTM (NL): #86 Rob Van Vijeiken (NL),
#89 Jeremy Van Horebeek (B)
Teka Suzuki (D): #42 Yauheni Tyetski (BR)
Motovision Suzuki (GB): Jason Dougan (GB),
Jake Nicholls (GB)
Swift Suzuki (GB): #74 Elliott Banks-Browne (GB),
#99 Sean Hamblin (US)
Beuversfoon Suzuki (NL): #80 Erik Eggens (NL)



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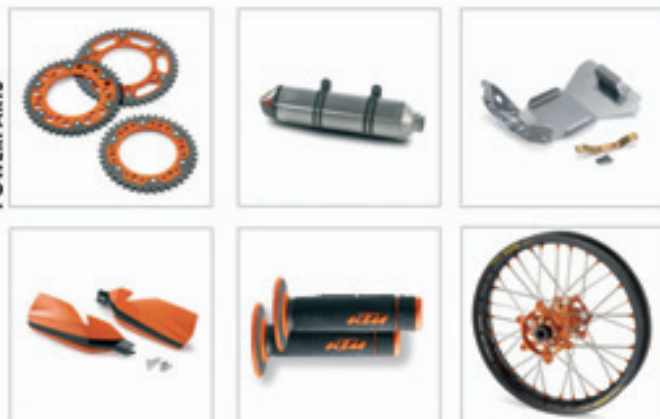
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STEALTH WARNING!

With heaps of hype surrounding team changes for his more high-profile rivals, it's all too easy to overlook Gareth Swanepoel who could well sneak in under the radar

Words and photos by Alex Hodgkinson

IF YOU allow yourself to get caught up in the hype surrounding Carl Nunn's return to Dixon Yamaha and Tommy Searle's switch to Red Bull KTM it can be all too easy to overlook a smooth-riding South African who put it over them both at times last year.

Gareth Swanepoel may not stand out in the same way his more high-profile rivals in the British and world MX2 championships do – but he's certainly not losing any sleep over this.

"No, my style's not too dramatic but I don't think that's a bad thing. A lot of times I'll come into the mechanic's area and they'll tell me I'm not pushing hard enough, not letting it hang out. Even Lisa [Church – Molson Kawasaki team manager] said it too but I know I'm pushing what I feel is 100 per cent and I'm not wasting

energy. It's been my style since I was a young kid and I think in the long run, when I reach my peak, it's going to really pay.

"I think that's why I do quite well at supercross too. I'm not wild, I ride smooth and that's how you make the time up in supercross. I mean, Everts is 10 times world champion, Chiodi won three, Townley was world champion and he didn't have style and Chad Reed is successful because he's smooth. If someone can compare me to them, that can't be a bad thing!"

It's now seven years since the 22-year-old from Jo'burg came to Europe. "Me and Tyla arrived together when Tinus Nel brought us over to start the Vangani team and basically we had two years together. The first year we raced

in Germany and I made a good couple of steps, finishing 10th in the German championship at the age of 15.

"I had a really good German supercross season too and was in the running for the championship but unfortunately I broke my wrist in the last round at Dortmund. That put me back on my preparation for the outdoors and when I came back I kept crashing and that is when I did my left shoulder for the first time. I basically missed the second year and that was the year Tyla started to get noticed."

And that was decisive in Swanny's career progression. "KTM wanted Vangani to run Leok, Tyla and Townley so I didn't have a ride anymore and I had to venture off to Germany to make my own way. Injuries at the wrong

Swanny whips it at the Molson team launch – he's got high hopes for 2007





On the gas in Ireland

time can make a big, big difference to who makes it when and how in a motocross career. There are so many young riders coming through and you just have to hope that you don't get hurt at the wrong time. It can completely change the pattern of your career when you suddenly don't have the support anymore.

"But I have come back and last year, my fourth in the GPs, I almost finished top 10. In fact I would have done if I hadn't got hurt right at the end. But that's how it is – I've been seven years in Europe and six seasons I've had an injury.

"I've done my shoulder – the same one, the left one – three times. It's not perfect anymore but Doctor Claas fixed it up pretty good. The op went well and he's fixed it up real tight so I'll never be an awesome American football player but it's okay for motocross. It will be the end of the year before it's absolutely 100 per cent again and I'm going to have aches and pains but that's off the bike. When you're racing you can put it out of your head. I'm already pretty far advanced and there's six weeks to the first GP."

On top of the shoulder he's also sustained a broken wrist, broken scaphoid, tendonitis in his knee and compressed vertebrae in his neck

and back. "And they have always come right at the beginning of the season to wreck my year or near the end and have cost me a place in a championship."

After losing his ride to KTM's search for global domination, Swanny went green for the first time. "The first year without Tinus I rode for Kosak and just nothing came together. I wasn't good, the team didn't gel, we were down on power and nothing worked. I almost packed it all in right there and then. I worked so hard that year and still struggled but in retrospect I learned a lot too. I learned to speak German, I learned about life in general and I became a stronger person and grew up. At the time I just wanted out but looking back it taught me to appreciate what you have.

"I decided to give it one more year and I got a decent ride with a small team from East Germany, Kolling Yamaha. I ended up winning two German championships and quite a few international races to put my mark down, showing that I am a world class rider even though I wasn't doing it on the world stage.

"The deal was like riding the Under 21s and the Masters in the UK so it was the end of the season before I could try any GPs but I qualified when I got the chance. Just like all kids, I had always dreamed of coming over to

Europe to conquer the GPs but for a couple of years I just had to focus on what I had, making a living in Germany and setting my goal to win their national title. And I said to myself, 'Swanny, if you can't win the German championship, there's no way you're going to be world champion'. It's taken me a while to get where I am but coming up the hard way has taught me to appreciate the chances I got.

"And the best visiting card is results. You can have the best manager in the world, nobody's going to look at you without results. I didn't have enough money to pay him much back then but Glen Dempsey started to help me that year. He has a lot of connections and helped introduce me to the right people. He set up the deal for me to go back to Kosak and it was a completely different team with Bernd Eckenbach running the team.

"The second time around with Kosak was my first full year in the GPs. I just missed qualifying for the first GP and I just missed setting pole for the last GP in SA. There was a windstorm early in the day so they abandoned the heats and ran quali as a timed session – Ben Townley bumped me off pole with about 10 seconds to go. But I think that shows the improvement I made that year."

This improvement earned him the ride at



Molson but circumstances were not kind on his debut at Bercy where he got slammed into the wall in a heat. "I dislocated my shoulder and missed the start of the next outdoor season. And that cost me a lot because that was the winter I had to change to the four-stroke. But I came back stronger and had some top five finishes by the end of the year.

"Then I was coming in real strong and fast to 2006 but I crashed on a frozen track and broke my scaphoid in the pre-season so I only just got back on a bike before the first GP and it took me four or five GPs to find my feet again."

Despite running top 10 in the world for most of last season, Swanny was rarely in the limelight as Searle grabbed the headlines. "For sure it was frustrating to be always playing catch-up last year, particularly when guys like you always ask me that. You try to focus mainly on yourself and I wanted to beat Tommy just as much as I wanted to beat anyone else. I lost a lot of points at the beginning of the season and once I found my feet it was a catch-up game. Being in the same team, same equipment, we were always pretty close and I think we helped push each other on.

"There were several times when I passed Tommy towards the end of the races but it was the same for him, he was always fighting to



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keep me behind him. That race in Sweden we powered up the leaderboard together and Tommy ended up on the podium but perhaps he would have got there if it hadn't been me chasing him down.

"But it can work both ways – either you pull each other down or you push each other on and I think me and Tommy helped each other reach new heights. That was a good thing. We had a nice competitive feeling, we weren't trying to kill each other, we were pushing each other on. I'm looking forward to the same situation with Swordy this year."

And the Molson set-up is the platform to help them succeed. "Me and Molson have grown together. It's awesome how they have worked to build one of the most professional set-ups in the paddock, getting better and better every year. They too have had to learn what is necessary at the very top level.

"A rider needs a good team to get results and a team needs good results to get good back-up. It's very important that a team gels and there has to be a division of workload.

Race mechanics are on the road non-stop during the year and a team needs full-time staff back at the workshops building the engines. Everyone makes mistakes but the team has learned from theirs and they now have the right set-up, the right guys doing the right stuff all the way down the line with everybody focused on reaching our goals together.

"My goal is to come into the season competitive from the beginning and I think I'm going to be ready by the first GP. Clearly Pourcel and Cairoli are the favourites but I don't think it's going to be a runaway from those two. Tyla and Tommy will be there too and don't underestimate Gundersen. A lot of people don't rate him but what he achieved last year was coming off two years out of action.

"And I think the pattern of the races will be different this year. When you look at the list there are five or six guys who can be champion, another five or six who can finish top 10 but then there's a gap. There aren't a lot of guys coming down from MX1 but there are five or six who have moved onto 450s. Everyone's

going to crash sometimes and have to come through the field but you won't have those five or six guys to contend with. There will be one or two young kids who will spring a surprise but that's every year.

"And I can't see any reason why I can't be in there too. I believe in myself and I think we're going to be there this year. I believe the bike is competitive and I believe I am. I beat a lot of those guys last year and if I stay injury free we'll be in contention."

And then? First the world, then America? "I've been wanting to go to the US since I was a kid but I'll let it come. If I do go it's got to be next year. I don't think you have to go as a teenager but there comes a point where your chance is gone and I'll be 23 next year. It all depends on offers and that depends on results.

"I'm not going to think about it too much. If the time comes and I got the offer of a good deal then I think I would go but if I don't I can live with that and I'll set my goals in Europe for the rest of my career. Everts stayed and he didn't do too bad!"



On home turf in South Africa

Eurovision

Seeing the bigger picture

"I think it's an indication of the forward-looking approach of the team that we are the only British team which has been contesting the big races on the continent before the first GP. The British boys seem to like to stay in England and I have to say that the British is one of the strongest championships but I don't believe you can do it that way. It's the same everywhere – England, SA, wherever – the boys are fast on their own tracks but you take them out of their own backyard and they struggle.

"Tracks are different everywhere and you have to be able to ride them all to be able to succeed at world level. If I believed England was the place to be based then I would do that but it is almost impossible to simulate a GP track and the farmland tracks in the UK are not what you race in the GPs and you have to travel so far just to find a track that's open.

"And then when you get there there are only one or two riders of GP class – in Belgium you drive 10 minutes to the track and there are 15 other GP riders there so you know if you're on the pace. The Molson team recognised years ago that staying in England was not the way to go and I'm very confident that we can have a very good year."







STORM WARNING!

It's a nightmare for Nunny who ends the day in an ambulance but the rain-lashed Hawkstone International MX is a wet dream for Rattray and Strijbos

Words by Toby Fuller



.....

THIS YEAR'S world championship is shaping up to be one of the closest-contested for years and with the opening round less than a month down the line what better preparation could the GP big guns ask for than a wet and wild Hawkstone Park in early March?

Of course, the reason why this year's MX1 championship is up in the air is because of Stefan Everts' retirement – which also means that the 10-time world champ, a regular at the Salop club's season opener, isn't racing this year's Hawkstone International Motocross.

So for the ninth running of Europe's biggest pre-season MX Josh Coppins finds himself in the hot-seat as pre-event favourite. The new Rinaldi Yamaha signing is in good company in the MX1 division with works Suzuki pairing Steve Ramon and Kevin Strijbos present and correct and home interest centred around new

factory Kawasaki man Billy MacKenzie and his team-mate Tanel Leok. And in the red corner back from the US of A is former AMA and British 125cc champ Mike Brown with CAS Honda team-mate and current British Open champion Ken De Dycker.

Just for good measure throw in the likes of Marc De Reuver, Sven Breugelmans, Jussi Vehvilainen, Max Nagl, Gordon Crockard, James Noble and many super-fast 'unknown' sand specialists from Holland and Belgium and you've got a heavyweight contest on your hands!

Tyla Rattray heads the entry list for the MX2 class and the field is equally strong in this division as the names of Erik Eggens, Pascal Leuret, Wyatt Avis, Sean Hamblin, Gareth Swanepoel, Carl Nunn and Tommy Searle suggest. ►



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The heavens open for practice and as the MX1 big guns arrive at the line for race one the rain is still persisting it down. De Reuver gets first pick of the gate by clocking a practice time of 2.20.6 – a full half-second ahead of De Dycker and Coppins. They roar off the line into the tunnel and as they emerge from the trees Coppins is the man to catch but former team-mate Ken De Dycker has other ideas and sticks an early pass on the Kiwi. And with De Reuver in tow and catching the leading pair the race is shaping up to be a classic.

Stribbos wants to be part of the action and makes light work of Nagl, then takes advantage of a fallen De Reuver before finding himself closing in on a fading Coppins who's suffering with a bad case of arm-pump. De Dycker – not

exactly famous for his stamina late on in a race – is no match for his flying fellow Belgian who eventually claims victory with ease. Top three Brits are Crockard in sixth, Brad Anderson in 15th and James Noble who's 16th.

De Reuver makes it another Yamaha holeshot in race two but he's overhauled by De Dycker who threatens to take control of the race. But first race winner Stribbos is on a roll and once he gets his nose in front the outcome never looks in doubt. Coppins is again at the forefront of things but he's still pumped up and can't mount a real challenge on the leaders, finishing the race in fourth ahead of Nagl. Billy Mac, a crasher in the opening race, gets a far better start second time out to post eighth just ahead of Noble aboard his Multitek Honda. ▶

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Results

MX1

1	Kevin Strijbos	(Suzuki Geboers)	30+30=60
2	Ken De Dycker	(CAS Honda)	27+27=54
3	Josh Coppins	(Yamaha Rinaldi)	25+23=48
4	Marc De Reuver	(Yamaha Rinaldi)	21+25=46
5	Max Nagl	(Sarholz KTM)	23+21=44
6	Steve Ramon	(Suzuki Geboers)	17+17=34
7	Gordon Crookard	(PAR Homes Honda)	19+10=29
8	Marvin Van Daele	(Shineray Honda)	13+11=24
9	Tanel Leok	(Motorex Kawasaki)	0+19=19
10	James Noble	(Multitek Honda)	5+13=18

MX2

1	Tyla Rattray	(Red Bull KTM)	30+30=60
2	Erik Eggens	(Suzuki)	27+27=54
3	Tom Church	(Molson Kawasaki)	23+23=46
4	Tommy Searle	(Red Bull KTM)	15+25=40
5	Martin Barr	(Bike It Dixon Yamaha)	25+15=40
6	Ray Rowson	(Molson Kawasaki)	17+17=34
7	Carl Nunn	(Bike It Dixon Yamaha)	8+21=29
8	Shaun Simpson	(Wulfsport Kawasaki)	7+19=26
9	Jason Dougan	(Fork Rent Suzuki)	19+6=25
10	Markus Schiffer	(Sarholz KTM)	21+0=21

hawkstone mx

© Andrew Ferguson



Rattray reacts quickest to the drop of the gate to take the holeshot and he's fortunate that some of his main rivals suffer nightmare first laps. After looking so impressive at the final British championship round of '06 here at Hawkstone, Searle gets boxed in off the start and Carl Nunn finds himself involved in a pile-up. Both have a lot of work to do to fight their way back through the Hawkstone sand.

Martin Barr's a surprise package, holding down a good second and resisting the attentions of Eggens for the first third of the race. But it's Rattray who's in control and looking unbeatable. Tom Church – who's hoping to put an injury-plagued '06 behind him – is

having a blinder and, looking back to full fitness, is showing good speed as he chases after third-placed Marcus Schiffer. And TC is being tailed by his Molson Kawasaki team-mate Ray Rowson who's having a cracking opening moto.

Fork Rent Suzuki's presence is felt in the shape of Jake Nicholls and Jason Dougan who are both running top 10 all race much to the delight of team boss Mark Chamberlain but the good-sized crowd have their eyes on Tommy Gun and Nunny. Both have been left with a uphill task and both just grit their teeth, get their heads down and plough forward through the sand with Tommy finishing a respectable eighth and the Dixon Yamaha coming home 13th. ▶

Tommy Searle just misses out on a podium finish



QUOTE UNQUOTE

Billy MacKenzie

"Wet, boggy, hard work, fun – it's been all right but the weather has been against us. I have enjoyed it though the results and starts could have been better and I've just been feeling my feet a little bit working on the starts and corners. The starts I was getting weren't too good so I just tried my best and came away safe ready for Canada Heights."

Kevin Strijbos

"I felt good and it was a pretty easy win actually. I was not too good off the start in the first race and I was third for quite a while but worked on catching the guys in front of me and things went to plan. In the second heat my start was better but the first few laps were shaky and I let Ken get away a little bit. When I started to find my rhythm again then my pace was better and it was quite straightforward for the win once I had the lead. The track was tough especially with some of the deep ruts."

Brad Anderson

"I qualified ninth which I was happy with as there was a good field today. Today was like a warm-up for me to see how I do against all these other top boys. First race I got an okay start and stalled it first lap then was chasing back through – my speed and fitness was good. The second one I got a good gate in the top 10, then stalled it again, then fought through again and instead of giving up just had to get on with it and try harder to get up with the other boys."

Steve Ramon

"Not such a bad day, just starts were not so good and today it was important to get a good start because the track was difficult to pass with the weather – if you don't get a good start the goggles are immediately dirty – but my riding was not so bad but I can do better. Last week I was ill and my body is still recovering so it was good to come over here and race."

Ken De Dycker

"My day was pretty good and did what I expected, came here and did some good starts and try to feel if we are going the right way with the bike and my physical condition. Today has been really good for me and let's see where we are in four weeks."

Wayne Smith

"I was really excited about coming here today – obviously I snapped my ACL here at the last round of the British last year and only started racing again three weeks ago so it's just about getting back on the pace and cramming in as much riding as possible. Today has gone well and we have drawn lots of positives from it and put me in good stead for next weekend at Canada Heights."



A race one crash keeps
Marc De Reuver off the podium

Tom Church

"It was a good day and I'm really happy because I have worked hard all winter and it was such an awkward day with the track and stuff. To come away with third overall I'm pretty happy with that – my speed was good, wasn't far off the front guys and I have made a big improvement on last year."

Josh Coppins

"Pretty average day really but I finished on the podium. I had good starts, just had arm-pump in the first race and went down in the second but still happy going home uninjured which is a first from a Hawkstone International for me but obviously I like to win. Just not up to it in the first two races."

Looking to keep out of trouble for race two, Tommy guns it off the line and grabs the lead but he's in good company on the opening lap with Nunny, Rattray, Eggens and Church all close behind. Despite the clear track ahead Searle's lead only lasts a couple of laps as Rattray goes past to take up the running but Searle is not letting him have it easy and is always within striking distance. Nunn fades

back but it's Eggens who's again the man on a mission, catching up with the young Brit before passing him on the final lap. Church finishes a fine fourth to finish a pleasing and well-deserved third overall on the day.

The top 20 MX1, top 16 MX2 and four promoters' choices are lumped together for the Grand Final. The MX2 riders fire off the line first with a five-second advantage over the MX1 big

boys and as the gate drops the heavens open.

It's Rattray leading from the front with Searle and Nunny but the race comes to an abrupt end after just two laps as Nunny goes down hard after bailing out mid-flight over a large table-top. He's taken away with a suspected back injury but thankfully is okay. With the rain lashing down the organisers' decision is an easy one and the race is abandoned.



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SMOKIN' MUSCAT!

BYMX TITLE CONTENDER ROB MUSCAT'S BACK ON A TWO-STROKE 85 AFTER GIVING IT A GO WITH THE 150F – WE GET HIS VIEWS ON THAT, HIS CAREER SO FAR AND HOW HE HOPES THE FUTURE WILL PAN OUT...

Words and photos by still-mx.co.uk

Rob Muscat is currently one of the brightest stars in youth motocross and the popular 12-year-old has already seen plenty of success. We caught up with the former British Auto champ, KWS and British Masters podium placer and member of the winning England youth des Nations team in between practice sessions at Matchams Park to get the low-down on this awesomely talented racer.

Rage: The last time we saw you riding you were aboard a CRF150 and now you're back on the 85cc two-stroke – what's the story?
RM: "The Honda 150F is a very strong and powerful bike, it pulls out of the corners really well but I found that it didn't have the speed of the 85 so I made the switch back."

Rage: Now you're climbing through the ranks it must seem like a long time since you first rode a motorbike. What was your first experience on two wheels?

RM: "I was two years old and my first bike was a QR50 with a sidecar attached as my feet didn't touch the floor. It made coming to a stop much easier."

Rage: The new season is about to start, what preparations have you been making through the winter?

RM: "I've not been racing much this winter but have been training hard on and off the bike. I've been swimming and doing gym work which really helps my fitness. I feel that I am ready and have a good set-up – I'm really looking forward to it."

Rage: What other interests do you have apart from motocross?

RM: "BMX, minibikes, swimming, running and I enjoy rugby at school too. I guess I like anything that will help with my fitness and riding."

Rage: What are your best memories of last year's season – on and off the bikes – and for what reason?

RM: "As far as riding is concerned I would say it was being picked for the BYMX team event for the Matchams team."

"Off the bike it has got to be meeting Team USA at Tonymoto before the des Nations. Seeing legends like Roger de Coster and chatting with Bubba is not something you get to do very often."



Rage: Your friends at school must think you are pretty cool – what do they make of your success on a bike?

RM: "Most of my friends think what I do is cool and I think a lot of them would like to do what I do."

Rage: This year you will be competing in the British Masters, the BYMX and various other meetings. Is there a round that you look forward to more than any other?

RM: "I enjoy every race I do because I get to ride the top tracks. It will be a busy year and I will be doing all the events on my Full Throttle MX-prepared Honda 85. Hopefully I will find time to get out and race on my minibike. There are other competitions I will be entering including the Canada Heights international – it

all depends on my schedule."

Rage: Which rider would you most want to be like, not just because they're successful but because of the way they ride and their attitude?

RM: "Stefan Everts is a true legend of the sport and his style is truly amazing – the way he reads the track is awesome as well."

Rage: Let's jump in to the DBR DeLorean and time-travel 30 years into the future. What memories would you like to have of your motocross career?

RM: "I think in the future if I could look back over my motocross career I'd want to have the memories of winning lots of national and international titles and be known as a hard-charging but smooth rider."

Rage: You're heading off to Spain in less than a week, I take it you're not just going to top your tan up?

RM: "Dad is driving us to Spain to have training with Stefan and Harry Everts. We're going to spend 10 days riding and learning in preparation for the up-coming season."

Rage: Well all the best for the coming season Rob – we hope your decision to go for two-stroke power pays off. Now here's your chance to say thanks in print to the people and companies that help make it all possible for you...

RM: "Thanks to Graham at Full Throttle MX, Hooper Properties, Lewis Mobility, Hartley Windows and Greg Hanson for all his hard work over the years."

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MAX!

WELCOME TO RAGE'S NEW MONTHLY COLUMN
WRITTEN BY TEAM GREEN'S MAX ANSTIE

Hi everybody, it's Max! With the last week of school coming to an end after a good week of mock SATS we were all looking forward to the half term Mervyn Anstie Motocross Academy camp in the sand.

After an early start and a fast trip on the Euro tunnel we were at the track in Dunkerque for 10am. We met up with the other school members then went into our warm-up which seemed to mostly consist of feeling the bike hit you in the back of your head – it's not easy riding sand after two months away from the stuff.

Once we were all warmed up we did a moto. It was nice to be able to ride with people I know and have lots of fun. With the likes of Ollie McMurray, Max Acres, Harry Clarke, Taylor Smith, Will Wall and Alex Rockwell riding it was a great day. Ollie played dead for most of the moto after he got shot by his handlebars, Harry Clarke's apparently scared of a washing machine and Perry Acres – Max's dad – tried to show Max how to do it and went flying through the air and splat onto his face.

We carried on having fun and learning the ways of sand again throughout the day and by the end of it we'd all made steps towards our goals. With the first day back in the sand and the first day of the week school at the MAMXA coming to an end it felt nice to be back in the soft stuff.

Going back to reality I know all of you year nine students have probably got your year 10 options and we have all got to make some choices. These choices lead to your life in the later world whether it's becoming a professional motocross racer or future prime minister. The key is to be smart and ahead of the game – if you remember that it will help you to achieve your goals faster.

If you're in primary school or university it's all the same when it comes to revising for an exam whether it be big or small – you need to make it easy on yourself. So that means taking the key points and sticking them somewhere you can see them every day so it imprints in your memory. Don't put it in a book because you'll never read it...



Tom Allen wins a badly-needed training day with Rob Herring

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Max pounds out the practice laps at Glen Helen

BYMXBUSTED!

There's bad news if you were looking forward to competing in all eight rounds of this year's BYMX championship as a clash of dates with the British MX GP at Donington means the series has been cut to seven rounds.

And if you're gonna ride in the UK's premier series this year then you'd best like riding in sand as over half the rounds are gonna be run in the soft stuff. The series starts in – yep you've guessed it – sand at the Desertmartin GP circuit in Northern Ireland in a couple of weeks time! We'll see you there!

2007 BYMX championship Series schedule

April 6/7	Desertmartin
April 21/22	Culham
May 19/20	Brampton
June 9/10	Pontrilas
July 7/8	Talsarn
July 28/29	Leuchars
October 6/7	Hawkstone Park

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MEAN STREETS!

BILLY'S BURGLED IN FRANCE THEN TAKES A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE THROUGH THE MEAN STREETS OF MARSEILLES

WELL, FIRST off I would like to let you all know that I have successfully returned from the track I broke my collarbone at! Whoopee! Secondly, sorry for anyone who didn't understand half of my column last month but ye got tae keep both sides of the wall happy ye ken!

Me, Bry, Stevie and a little Aussie called Rhooky set off up to Tain for a two-day riding trip. I even got over the Forth road bridge this time! But before this there were the internationals – Mantova, Valence and Hawkstone. I set off for Mantova not even knowing if I would be riding. I got a check-up at the hospital in Belgium on the way and luckily all was approved and I was told to 'take it easy'! I picked up Luka (my mechanic) and we headed south in the camper. I wanted to ride before I raced (to see if I could) so we found a nice little sand track on the Friday and busted out some 20-minute motos just to get into the swing of things again.

It felt weird for two reasons – one cos it was the first time since my collarbone and two because it was maybe only the fourth time since the des Nations! I hadn't really stepped on a bike for months – only for the occasional photoshoot and testing – so going to Mantova I was just looking to loosen up. So to sum the weekend up, I crashed in every race (just small ones) and came from behind the whole time. Not the best results but every race was an improvement. Happy days.

Man, I get so bored talking about the races...mind if I just give you briefs? Okay then! The plan was to ride solid for two weeks to get some bike fitness – two days riding, one day off – so we stayed in sunny Italy for a week! Not much banter as it was work time so apart from racing some local hero at Asti, landing on an 85 and somehow managing to take out an old boy on a KTM while jumping round the outside of him, nothing really happened – and I was everyone's favourite after that, especially the 85 kid's father!

So, now for the good bit. Well, it'll be good for you guys listening to this story but...well...you'll see. On the way from Italy to France we stopped at the oh-so popular French service stations. I parked behind the Kawasaki truck in between two artics so I was well hidden. Luka was staying in the big truck so I was on my Jack Jones in the camper. Forgetting I was in France I just snibbed the door and jumped up in to kip. I always fall asleep with the TV on – not that has anything to do with what happened but it sure made it easier for the f****r who decided to break my lock and rob me while I was fricking sleeping in it! He left the door wide open which I think is what woke me up and as I stirred and started to open my eyes, all I saw was some guy standing in the camper!

Not really knowing what was going on as I tried to wake up, I thought it was Luka and before I could say anything he had launched out the door, jumped in a car and f****d off! Cheeky b*****! As I came round nothing appeared to be missing. I thought 'that was lucky, I musta caught him in the nick of time' but as consciousness started to kick in I realised my rucksack and wallet were gone along with all my start money from Mantova, my passport, credit cards, the lot! They even nicked my jackets! I was raging!

I jumped in the camper and gave chase to, well, nothing! It was raining hard and I almost lost it a couple times – all the shelves smashed in the garage

bit where the bike had come loose! I stopped by every single service station for 50kms hoping I would see this car! All these mad things were going through my head as to what I would do if I caught them!

I eventually stopped driving at about 3am and didn't get to sleep til six cos I was so angry! So in the morning I had to go to the police station and then the British Embassy which provided another pretty surreal day.

Driving through Marseilles to the embassy Luka and me couldn't believe some of the sights we were seeing! There were people who didn't look normal, like things you would see in the movies – like some kind of nuclear contamination had went on! The streets were all chewed up and there were some really scary looking transvestites walking around! Luka, completely intrigued by this weird looking city of inbreds, decided he wants to walk around and see more! I was less than enthused after already being robbed when IN my camper, I wasn't particularly keen to leave it unmanned in the City of Crime!

But off we trotted, walking deeper into the depths of this weird city – you actually had to put on an aggressive walk and stern look just to fit in. Everyone looked super-aggressive and you didn't want to make eye contact with anyone. They were the equivalent of chavs but 10 times worse! We found ourselves walking through a really dreary backstreet, the kind that feels claustrophobic and dirty. People had little tables out trying to sell you what can only be described as 'stuff out the bin'! Old, old second-hand shoes, stolen video tapes – I had my eyes peeled for my passport! It really was a horrible sight, a city on it's knees pretty much.

But the most shocking thing I saw was a pretty cute looking Indian girl, must have only been in her early 20s, begging on these dirty streets with a new-born baby. She wasn't even begging – she looked too scared to beg. Just sitting there with a little woven basket trying to stop her baby crying. I had to leave after that. It just goes to show how lucky we all are. I didn't even care about the stuff I'd had nicked after that – I probably woulda gave her the lot if I had it on me.

We had a photoshoot before Valence so it was cool to meet up with everyone from Kawasaki. Livia Lancelot was there riding and I swear she was getting her bike whipped sick! You would never have thought it was a girl – she has some sweet style! We did a lifestyle shoot in the centre of Nimes, all of us kitted out in casual clothing like a bit of a model shoot really! But we had a couple of bikes there which generated some interest that we didn't really want! Massive groups of people, all whispering to themselves. Call me paranoid but I told them to get the bikes in the van and get out of there!

Valence was okay – I had a second in the first race which everyone was pleased about, then crashed in the next two but came through pretty good. Riding is going well – the way my programme is set out will mean I'm on it for the first GP! Hawkstone was a bit of a nightmare – no repeats of last year this time round – but I will make it up to ya at Canada Heights!

See ya there...

Billy Mackenzie

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